

8 DCSE2003/2109/F - FIRST FLOOR EXTENSION TO EXISTING OFFICES AND EXTENSION TO FACTORY, ALAN KEEF LTD, LEA LINE, LEA, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 7LQ

For: Mr A Keef per Hook Mason, 11 Castle Street, Hereford, HR1 2NL

Date Received: 14th July 2003

Ward: Penyard

Grid Ref: 66535, 21353

Expiry Date: 8th September 2003

Local Member: Councillor H. Bramer

1. Site Description and Proposal

1.1 These factory premises are located on the west side of the A40(T) at Lea Line, adjoining appropriately the former railway line. The factory manufactures and repairs railway locomotives. The current proposal is for an extension to the main workshop and for a new two-storey office building. The former would extend at the north-west end the length of the workshop by about 10.5m, keep to the same width but with higher eaves and ridge in order to ensure adequate internal headroom. The walls and roof would be plastic coated metal sheeting. The office building would be of brick construction and would be joined to the south-east section of the workshop. It would be about 13.5m long x 8m wide with a ridge roof (8.6m high) topped with a clock tower.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance

PPG.7	The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development
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2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy E.6	Industrial Development in Rural Areas
Policy CTC.2	Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy CTC.9	Development Requirements

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

Policy ED.5	Expansion of Existing Businesses
Policy C.1	Development within Open Countryside
Policy C.8	Development within Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy GD.1	General Development Criteria
Policy T.3	Highway Safety Requirements
Policy T.4	Highway and Car Parking Standards

3. Planning History

3.1	SH860270PF	Change of use of warehouse to railway engineering.	-	Permitted 2.4.86
	SH860296PO	Erection of house and garage	-	Permitted 40.4.86
	SH861138PM	Erection of house and garage.	-	Permitted 16.12.86
	SH940621PF	Fill in railway cutting.	-	No objections 30.6.94

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Highways Agency is content to accept the proposal subject to a condition regarding visibility splays which the Council is directed to impose.
- 4.2 Environment Agency's advice is awaited.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.3 Head of Environmental Health has no objections to make.

5. Representations

- 5.1 The applicants have submitted details of the business and the reasons for the planning application. In summary the statement is as follows:-

1. Alan Keef Limited are locomotive builders and light railway engineers. The scope of the business ranges from the large scale garden railway up to, but not including, the full size railway.
2. Customers range from the peat industry, primarily in Northern England, through tunnelling contractors, to sugar estates and cement works in Tanzania and Bangladesh. The leisure industry forms a large portion of the business.
3. There is also a considerable business in the overhaul and re-building of steam locomotives for private individuals and the minor railway companies. An expanding part of the business is in what is best described as "railbound mechanical handling".
4. Current annual turnover is approaching £1,000,000.
5. The past few years have seen a steady increase in business and all the signs are that this is going to continue. This is the main reason for needing to expand office and workshop accommodation, the former being the more immediately important. The Portacabin-type building has been used as office accommodation for many years and this is now life-expired.
6. Currently, office staff is 6 full-time and one part-time, and workshop staff 6 full-time. In addition, there are two further employees and fairly regular employment is provided for 4-5 self-employed sub-contractors. Over a period of time, I foresee a requirement for a further 2-3 office employees and a similar number, possibly more, in the workshop.
7. The size of the equipment with which the Company deals is getting larger and this is the principal reason for the workshop extension. The additional height is required in order to give satisfactory overhead crange for the large items of locomotives and rolling stock. For example, the company is about to start on a

replica of the 1820 locomotive "Puffing Billy" for Beamish Museum and such facilities become essential in the building of this machine.

- 5.2 The Parish Council "supports provided that there are adequate safety regulations regarding paint spraying and that the Highways Agency is satisfied about the safety of larger vehicles entering and exiting."
- 5.3 3 letters of objection have been received from local residents. These are summarised below and an additional letter from consultants acting on behalf of one neighbour is included in full in the Appendix to this report:
- initially this converted agricultural storage building was screened by mature trees but these have been progressively removed, opening site to view especially at front where plethora of rusty junk, clutter and machinery has proliferated and is now on view
 - site has also become noisier with longer hours worked (very early mornings, late working, some weekends)
 - no effort has been made to integrate the facility into the surrounding countryside
 - extensions are over-bearing and insensitive in design and not in scale or character nor appropriate to the settlement and locality; height of offices would make them significant feature - one of the first things visitors would see as they enter the county. Overlook the property opposite with resulting loss of amenity
 - in view of the above objectors are concerned that the current proposal would result in more rusting equipment on view, more noise and pollution (e.g. paint spraying) and more damage to the distinctiveness of the local area.
 - entrance is on very busy A40 near sharp bend and is very dangerous - long vehicles have to manoeuvre to enter site resulting in tailbacks and stationary vehicles on a blind corner. Proposal would result in more heavy lorries, exacerbating these problems.

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 The statutory development plan encourages the expansion of existing businesses in the countryside. Thus the preamble to Local Plan Policy ED.5 states that "the Council will support the expansion of a business activity in a countryside location where this will not give rise to serious environmental problems or have a damaging effect upon the landscape or nature conservation". The issues raised by this proposal therefore are (i) the effect on the character of the countryside, (ii) the effect on the amenities of neighbours and (iii) highway safety.
- 6.2 The extension to the factory increases the length of the building by about a third. As noted in the representations a number of trees, which helped screen the site have been removed. Nevertheless it is considered that the extension would not be intrusive in the landscape. The office building would be attached to the front of the factory and from most views seen against this backdrop. This architect designed building would be of brick construction and would be more attractive than the former agricultural building. In the longer term, additional planting along the frontage would help reduce the visual impact of the factory. Overall it is not considered that the proposal would significantly harm the immediate landscape which is of Great Landscape Value.

- 6.3 The nearest house is about 60m from the proposed office building. * The factory would be about 30m from the closest residential property. There would be scope for adequate sound-proofing of the workshop extension, which, to a degree, would help to buffer noise emanating from the existing factory. It is not thought therefore that the privacy of neighbours would be compromised nor that there would be undue noise and disturbance. The clutter in the yard would be partly addressed by the proposed additional forecourt parking. There have not been any complaints to the Planning Department and consequently this alleged problem has not been investigated. However, a condition restricting external storage would be lawful and enforceable. It is accepted that a complete prohibition on external storage would not be practicable but significant improvements could be achieved.
- 6.4 The Highways Agency has carefully considered the highway aspects of the proposal. Additional parking is proposed but it is not practicable to make significant improvements to the visibility splays: the road is visible from the access for a distance of about 135m to the south-east and for about 75m to the north-west (i.e. to the 30mph speed limit). In these circumstances the Highways Agency does not object to the proposals. The improved layout of the forecourt should help to avoid lorries having to manoeuvre on the highway. It is considered that although not ideal the access is adequate for the modest increase in vehicular movements anticipated.
- 6.5 On the basis of the above appraisal it is concluded that there are insufficient grounds to refuse permission for the proposed development.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. B01 (Samples of external materials)

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.

3. G04 (Landscaping scheme (general))

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

4. G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general))

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

5. F02 (Scheme of measures for controlling noise)

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of occupiers of nearby properties.

6. F32 (Details of floodlighting/external lighting)

Reason: To safeguard local amenities.

7. F42 (Restriction of open storage)

Reason: To protect the appearance of the locality.

- 8. Visibility splays for the A40 trunk road access shall be kept clear of obstructions at all times.**

Reason: To enable the A40 trunk road to continue to be an effective part of the national system of routes for through traffic, in accordance with Section 10(2) of the Highways Act 1980 and to protect the interest of road safety on the Trunk Road.

- 9. H16 (Parking/unloading provision - submission of details)**

Reason: To minimise the likelihood of indiscriminate parking in the interests of highway safety.

Informative(s):

- 1. N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.