

**DCNW2004/2726/RM - PROPOSED FOUR
BEDROOMED DETACHED RESIDENTIAL DWELLING
ADJ. OAKCHURCH FARM, STAUNTON-ON-WYE,
HEREFORDSHIRE, HR4 7NE**

For: Mr & Mrs J Price at same address

Date Received:
23rd July 2004

Ward:
Castle

Grid Ref:
37427, 44819

Expiry Date:
17th September 2004

Local Member: Councillor J W Hope

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises a 0.125 hectare plot, forming part of a large field, which is located in an elevated position, flanked on its north and west sides by an unclassified road, which links the A438 to the south with the village of Staunton-on-Wye to the north-west.
- 1.2 The site lies to the west of the Parish Church, a listed building, and Church House. To the north is the existing farm complex associated with Oakchurch Farm. This includes an existing tied bungalow, a range of general purpose agricultural buildings and a number of mobile homes, providing accommodation for seasonal workers.
- 1.3 There is currently a mobile home located on part of the application site, which has been occupied by the applicant and his family since May, 2002.
- 1.4 Outline planning permission has been granted for a permanent dwelling to provide accommodation for the applicant and his family, pursuant to Application No. NW2003/2807/O on 17th December, 2003. Further to this, a reserved matters application for a dwelling with a gross floor area exceeding 300 square metres, excluding a double garage, was withdrawn (Application No. NW2004/1224/RM refers).
- 1.5 This revised application seeks reserved matters approval for a 4-bedroom dwelling with a total gross floor area of approximately 214 square metres, which includes farm office accommodation. The proposed dwelling comprises a modern, detached design and has a maximum height to the ridge of 8.6 metres. It would be located some 7 metres to the east of the existing mobile home and would be set into land which rises in an easterly and southerly direction. The rear elevation would face south, towards the A438, whilst the front would have an outlook towards the existing Oakchurch Farm complex.

2. Policies

2.1 Government Guidance

PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

CTC9 - Development Requirements
A4 - Agricultural Dwellings

2.3 Leominster and District Local Plan (Herefordshire)

A1 - Managing the District's Assets and Resources
A2 (D) - Settlement Hierarchy
A9 - Safeguarding the Rural Landscape
A24 - Scale and Character of Development
A43 - Agricultural Dwellings

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

S1- Sustainable Development
S2 - Development Requirements
S7 - Natural and Historic Heritage
DR1 - Design
DR2 - Land Use and Activity
H8 - Agricultural and Forestry Dwellings and Dwellings Associated with Rural Business
LA2 - Landscape character and Areas Least Resistant to Change

3. Planning History

NW2000/2914/0 - Site for Proposed Agricultural Dwelling. Refused
7th March, 2000.

NW2001/3130/0 - Proposed Agricultural Worker's Delling. Refused
10th January, 2002.

NW2002/1073/S - Proposed Farm Track. Prior Approval Not Required
25th April, 2002.

NW2003/2807/0 - Agricultural Worker's Dwelling. Approved.
17th December, 2003.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 Environment Agency raises no objection in principle.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 Head of Engineering and Transportation recommends refusal due to insufficient information on access details and parking proposals.

4.3 Chief Conservation Officer raises no objection, in view of the dwelling's smaller scale and better relationship to the existing road network. It is recommended that a mixed natural species hedgerow should be planted around the perimeter of the site.

5. Representations

- 5.1 One letter has been received from Drs Brian and Helen Beach, Church House, Staunton on Wye. No objection in principle is raised, provided that the house is situated as far west and south as possible to minimise the loss of outlook; any further outbuildings are designed and built in materials of similar quality to the new house and that sensitive planting is carried out along the eastern boundary.
- 5.2 Staunton on Wye Parish Council raises no objection, commenting that this is a much improved proposal.
- 5.3 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The principle of an agricultural worker's dwelling has been accepted through the granting of outline planning permission and, accordingly, the key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are an assessment of the commensurate size of the dwelling in relation to the requirements of the farming enterprise and the impact of the dwelling upon the character and appearance of the locality.
- 6.2 In this particular case, the farm holding extends to 103 hectares, with a further 21.5 hectares rented on a short-term tenancy arrangement. The operation comprises a mixed livestock, soft fruit and arable business and the dwelling represents the second property on the Oakchurch Farm holding.
- 6.3 In common with a number of recent Committee cases, the commensurate size of the dwelling represents the starting point for the consideration of the acceptability of the detailed design, with this requirement being set out in national guidance and Local Plan policy. It is a continuing aspiration of the local planning authority to establish a modest figure by which the commensurate size of a dwelling can be supported. In this case, the proposed dwelling, in its revised form, has a gross floor area of 214 square metres, which exceeds the 120 square metre tolerance advocated by your officers and represents an even larger proposal than those recently supported by Members at The Limes (177 square metres), the Nash (192 square metres) and Marsh Farm (160 square metres).
- 6.4 The applicant has sought to justify the size of the dwelling through the submission of audited accounts of the business from April 2003 to April 2004 and it has been requested that the precise figures be kept confidential, but it is advised that Oakchurch Farm is a profitable enterprise which, on the basis of current information, would support the construction costs of the proposed dwelling.
- 6.5 Whilst accepting this statement, it must also be borne in mind that the long-term affordability of the dwelling is a material consideration in terms of its potential to provide accommodation for future generations of farm workers. A dwelling of this size and in this particular location would command a significant market value, even taking into consideration its tied occupation. As a result, there is serious doubt that it would represent a sustainable form of development should the economic circumstances of the enterprise take a downturn. It is envisaged that its value would far exceed the

average wage of an agricultural worker, making it potentially very difficult to resist the removal of the tie in the future.

- 6.6 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal, as submitted, would fail to satisfy the advice set out in Annexe A of Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, which has recently superseded the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 7 – The Countryside, Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development.
- 6.7 In addition to the concerns raised in respect of the commensurate size of the dwelling in relation to the functional needs of the holding and the implications for its long-term viability, it is also considered that its height and general design are such that it will cause unnecessary harm to the character and appearance of the locality. A reduction in the footprint and the further rationalisation of the internal accommodation would enable a reduction in the 8.6 metre maximum ridge height and limit the visual impact of the dwelling on the skyline when viewed from the A438 to the south. Furthermore, the external appearance of the dwelling, with particularly emphasis on the gabled details, fenestration and glazed balcony, is considered to have a suburban character which is out of keeping with the more traditional appearance of existing properties in the vicinity of the site.
- 6.8 It is acknowledged that design is a highly subjective matter, but, in your officer’s view, the current proposal is not acceptable and, in the absence of a justification supporting a dwelling of this size and scale, it is considered that there would be a detrimental impact on the area, contrary to Policies A1, A9 and A24 of the Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire).

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposed dwelling, in view of its overall size, is not considered to be commensurate with the established functional need of the farming enterprise and, as such, the future occupation of the property, in accordance with the occupancy condition, would be compromised, due to the relatively high value of such a property. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to advice set out in Annexe A of PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and Policy A43 of the Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)**
- 2 The proposed dwelling, by reason of its size, design and prominent location, would constitute a conspicuous feature in the landscape, which would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of other residential development in the locality. In the absence of an over-riding need for a dwelling of this size, it is considered that there will be a detrimental effect on the character of this site and surroundings, which would be contrary to Policies A1, A9 and A24 of the Leominster District Local Plan.**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.