

6 DCCE2004/4218/F - NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS AND IRRIGATION POOL. NEW ACCESS AND DRIVE AT UFTON COURT, HOLME LACY, HEREFORD, HR2 6PH**For: F.I. Watkins & Sons per David Edwards Associates, Station Approach, Barrs Court, Hereford, HR1 1BB****Date Received: 6th December, 2004 Ward: Hollington Grid Ref: 54071, 35265**
Expiry Date: 31st January, 2005

Local Member: Councillor W.J.S. Thomas

Introduction

Members will recall that the determination of this application was deferred at the Central Area Planning Sub-Committee (4th May, 2005) in order for a site visit to be held. The site visit took place on 11th May, 2005.

Further to the discussion that took place on this proposal, a view from the applicant has been sought on the potential for repositioning the complex to the site of existing buildings further to the east. The applicant has advised of their reluctance to reposition the complex citing the pre-application discussion directing them towards the currently proposed site. It is maintained that the proposed site represents the most appropriate location having regard to landscape impact and residential amenity. The alternative suggestion is considered to represent a more isolated and prominent site.

An additional condition requiring the clearance of the existing range of buildings and associated open storage has been attached but otherwise the attached report remains identical to that previously published.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises undeveloped agricultural land located on the north side of an unclassified road (UC72006) between Holme Lacy, located some 1.3 kilometres to the east and Little Dewchurch, approximately 3 kilometres to the south. The site occupies a relatively low lying position within the surrounding countryside which is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value.
- 1.2 The locality is predominantly agricultural with scattered woodland and small clusters of properties. There are dwellings to the south of the site positioned on either side of the unclassified road, including Ufton Court Farmhouse and its associated historic farm buildings that benefit from planning permission for conversion to residential use. To the north and at a distance of some 330 metres is an established group of properties with Mitchmore House and Redbrook being closest to the application site itself.
- 1.3 The site is set back from the highway behind two established hedgerows and a wood (Widows Wood) that forms part of the south eastern boundary. Public footpaths run along the southern boundary and to the east of the site.

- 1.4 Planning permission is sought to establish a new complex of agricultural buildings including livestock buildings and a combined grain/cold and general store. The new accommodation would comprise three separate buildings, the largest being the combined grain/cold and general storage building measuring some 58 metres by 30 metres on the ground with a maximum ridge height of 8.5 metres. In addition to the new buildings a new access and track is proposed. The new access would be located immediately to the east of an existing bungalow that is owned by the applicant and occupied by a farmworker. A series of irrigation pools is also proposed. The design of these has been revised in order to reduce their impact and improve nature conservation value. Comprehensive landscaping is also proposed around the embankment that would be created to enclose the building.
- 1.5 The application is accompanied by a statement of justification and information relating to the traffic generation associated with the new complex.

2. Policies

2.1 Government Guidance:

PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan:

Policy CTC2 - Areas of Great Landscape Value
 Policy CTC6 - Landscape Features
 Policy CTC9 - Development Requirements
 Policy CTC11 - Trees and Woodland
 Policy CTC12 - Improving Wildlife Value
 Policy A1 - Development on Agricultural Land
 Policy A3 - Agricultural Buildings

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan:

Policy GD1 - General Development Criteria
 Policy C1 - Development Within Open Countryside
 Policy C8 - Development Within AGLV
 Policy C9 - Landscape Features
 Policy C11 - Protection of Best Agricultural Land
 Policy C17 - Trees/Management
 Policy C18 - New Tree Planting
 Policy ED9 - New Agricultural Buildings

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft):

Policy S1 - Sustainable Development
 Policy S2 - Development Requirements
 Policy S7 - Natural and Historic Heritage
 Policy DR1 - Design
 Policy DR2 - Land Use and Activity
 Policy DR4 - Environment
 Policy E13 - Agricultural and Forestry Development
 Policy LA2 - Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
 Policy LA5 - Protection of Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Policy LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes
Policy NC8	-	Habitat Creation, Restoration and Enhancement

3. Planning History

3.1 None relevant to application site.

3.2 A series of permissions have been granted permitting the conversion of traditional barns associated within Ufton Court Farmhouse into dwellings:-

CE2002/2500/F	Conversion of farm buildings into 5 dwellings.	Approved 6th November, 2002.
CE2002/2501/F	Conversion of farm building into single dwelling.	Approved 6th November, 2002.
CE2004/1961/F	Conversion of farm building into single dwelling.	Approved 7th January, 2005.
CE2004/2784/F	Conversion of barn to create 3 dwellings.	Approved 21st December, 2004.

3.3 A total of 8 dwellings have been approved excluding the existing farmhouse.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 Environment Agency raise no objections.

4.2 Forestry Commission raise no objections.

4.3 The Ramblers' Association raise concerns in relation to the impact of the development on the public rights of way along the boundary with Widows Wood and raise issues relating to the accuracy of the plans.

Internal Council Advice

4.4 Traffic Manager raises no objection subject to conditions relating to visibility splays, the setting back of any gates and the provision of adequate parking and turning space within the farm complex.

4.5 Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards raises no objection.

4.6 Conservation Manager raises no objection subject to the appropriate conditioning of woodland planting and a well designed series of "conservation pools". A standard archaeological watching brief condition is recommended.

4.7 Public Rights of Way Manager raises no objection subject to clarification in relation to the positioning of the embanked areas and their proximity to the public footpath network.

4.8 Team Leader - Minerals and Waste raises no objection subject to clarification of the treatment of excavated materials.

5. Representations

5.1 A total of four letters have been received from the following persons:-

- Terry Watts, Little Bogmarsh, Holme Lacy
- Jackie Grant, Mears Croft, Holme Lacy
- Professor A.D. Valentine, Wood Meadows, Holme Lacy
- Vanessa Cluett and Ray Blackshaw, Jade House, Holme Lacy

5.2 A further anonymous letter was received.

5.3 The concerns raised can be summarised as follows:-

- highway safety concerns due to increased use of existing road network by larger volumes of HGV traffic
- visual impact of new access road across open countryside
- impact of additional traffic movements on quiet enjoyment of the area
- impact on landscape
- noise due to animals and machinery
- noise and disturbance will render our garden unusable in the summer months
- development should be located closer to existing farm buildings

5.4 Holme Lacy Parish Council raise concerns about the access from Bogmarsh Lane and request careful screening of the development.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Central Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

6.1 The key considerations in the determination of this application are as follows:-

- (a) the justification for the new farm complex;
- (b) the visual impact upon the character and appearance of the Area of Great Landscape Value;
- (c) the impact upon residential amenity and;
- (d) highway safety.

Agricultural Justification

6.2 Policy C1 of the South Herefordshire District Local Plan establishes that the principle of agricultural development in the countryside is acceptable subject to consideration of its impact upon the natural beauty and amenity of the locality. Furthermore Policy A3 of the Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan determines that applications for the construction of agricultural buildings will be treated sympathetically where a need can be shown and where the siting harmonises with the surrounding rural area. Issues relating to landscape impact are set out in the next section but as a starting point it is necessary to consider the nature of the enterprise and its requirements.

- 6.3 The farm is run over two principal holdings which are geographically remote. The main holding is located at Stonehouse Farm, Much Marcle some 12 miles away and this runs to approximately 460 acres and is well served by an appropriate range of modern and traditional buildings (including grain and cold storage). These adequately serve the needs of this part of the enterprise. Ufton Farm comprises approximately 375 acres of farmland. This element of the enterprise currently has no buildings. This is in part due to the residential development of the traditional buildings and the associated removal of other modern buildings. The plan to redevelop the existing buildings and relocate to a new site was precipitated by a fire which virtually destroyed the existing grain store and a recognition of the general unsuitability of the established cattle housing for modern farming practices.
- 6.4 The application is principally submitted in order for the applicants to re-establish their livestock enterprise and support the cereal and potato production which remains the main thrust of the business. Prior to the damage/removal of the existing buildings at Ufton Court it is advised that around 350 breeding ewes (producing some 600 lambs) and 280 beef cattle were kept with further store cattle purchased to fill the available sheds between autumn and spring. It is intended that similar levels of stock would be kept at the proposed complex.
- 6.5 The cold store building (capable of storing 1000 tonnes of potatoes) would serve the needs of the 100 acres of potatoes grown at Ufton Court whilst the canopy building would provide for undercover storage of fertilizer, sugar beet and machinery.
- 6.6 On the basis of the size of the holding and the requirements associated with the mixed livestock and potato production enterprise proposed, it is considered that buildings of the scale proposed are justified. It has been acknowledged through the granting of permission for conversion of the traditional buildings adjacent to Ufton Court Farmhouse that these were no longer viable for modern farming and furthermore the generally poor condition of the remaining modern buildings is recognised as a basis for considering the redevelopment of the buildings associated with Ufton Court Farm.
- 6.7 In the light of this the supporting justification is accepted as is the principle of the redevelopment on the scale proposed in accordance with Policy A3 of the Hereford and Worcester Country Structure Plan. The remaining policy tests essentially focus on the acceptability of the location in landscape amenity and highway safety terms.

Impact on the Area of Great Landscape Value

- 6.8 It is a well established principle that isolated developments of any form should generally be avoided in the open countryside and especially those that are specifically protected by landscape designations. In this case having established the principle of a farmstead of this size, it is not considered that any alternative appropriate location exists. The option of siting the buildings immediately to the west of the existing Ufton Court complex or opposite have been considered but the result would be potential conflict with properties not associated with the farm. In seeking to secure a compromise between landscape protection and residential amenity the proposed site makes use of the screening qualities of existing hedgerows defining field boundaries and established woodland. The result is a siting that would be largely screened from Bogmarsh Lane to the south and east and would otherwise be seen against the backdrop of woodland in longer distance views from the north. A comprehensive woodland planting scheme is proposed, the full details of which would be secured by condition.

- 6.9 The Conservation Manager is satisfied with the chosen siting for the buildings and through his input the irrigation pond will now take the form of a more aesthetically pleasing series of ponds that will serve to provide a potential habitat for wildlife. The formation of the access will inevitably require the loss of some hedgerow but the Traffic Manager has advised that the required visibility splays can be achieved within the existing carriageway and as such there will be no requirement to remove significant amounts of hedgerow. The driveway itself would skirt along the edge of another existing hedgerow and as such would not result in any significant harm to the landscape.
- 6.10 It is acknowledged that the ideal solution would be a proposal more closely related to established buildings but in a landscape characterised by scattered farmsteads and dwellings and in view of the other residential amenity constraints it is considered that as proposed the development will not appear out of place or detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.

Residential Amenity

- 6.11 A number of concerns have been raised in relation to the impact of the proposed development on residential amenity. These are acknowledged but in the first instance it is advised that the Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards raises no objection to the proposals. It should be noted that the activities associated with the proposed new buildings are broadly comparable with those associated with the former buildings and as such it is not considered that the intensity of the use will result in measurable harm to the established level of amenity in the surrounding area. It is clearly recognised that the proposed buildings will be somewhat closer to the cluster of properties to the north but at a distance of some 330 metres it is not considered that undue harm will be caused.
- 6.12 In the light of the above whilst the concerns of local residents are recognised it is advised that there would be insufficient grounds upon which to refuse this application in terms of its impact on residential amenity. It should be noted that the existing farm buildings have not been in use for some 2-3 years and as such local residents may have become used to a level of activity below that which would have been the case but it should be recognised that a need for buildings has been identified and as such the potential use of the existing buildings is a material consideration in the determination of this application. This applies similarly to the highway related issues raised.

Highway Safety

- 6.13 In response to concerns relating to the potential impact of additional HGV traffic on the local road network, comparative figures have been sought and provided by the applicant. These include details of vehicular traffic from the original working farm, activity during the period when Ufton Farm was without farm buildings and served from Stonehouse Farm and a projected level of traffic for the proposed buildings.
- 6.14 It is not considered necessary to provide a full breakdown of the figures in relation to each aspect of the enterprise (although these figures are available for inspection) but in the light of the figures provided there would be a net decrease in vehicle use from around 393 trips per annum at the original farm to approximately 278 trips relating to the proposed development. It appears that this is largely as a result of a reduction in the number of sheep associated with the new enterprise. In the three years that Ufton Court was serviced from Stonehouse Farm the average number of trips generated was 342 per annum.

- 6.15 It is obviously acknowledged that the nature of the enterprise can and inevitably will change and this would have a bearing on vehicular activity but it is generally recognised that the projected level of traffic equates favourably to the established level and as such it is not considered that the refusal of permission in respect of the amenity and highway safety implications of traffic generation is warranted.
- 6.16 A safe access can be created and subject to conditions the Traffic Manager has raised no objection. Furthermore the Public Rights of Way Manager is satisfied that the embanked enclosure of the farm buildings can be accommodated without detriment to the safe use of the public footpath network, although a condition is proposed to ensure that its alignment is preserved.

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. The development shall be carried out in all respects strictly in accordance with the approved plans (site plan and elevations received 3rd December 2004 and drawing no. 2893 and revised pond layout received 1st April 2005), except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission.**

Reason: To ensure adherence to the approved plans in the interests of a satisfactory form of development.

- 3. B10 (Details of cladding (agricultural and industrial buildings)).**

Reason: To minimise the visual impact of the development.

- 4. D03 (Site observation – archaeology).**

Reason: To allow the potential archaeological interest of the site to be investigated and recorded.

- 5. F18 (Scheme of foul drainage disposal).**

Reason: In order to ensure that satisfactory drainage arrangements are provided.

- 6. F32 (Details of floodlighting/external lighting).**

Reason: To safeguard local amenities.

- 7. F48 (Details of slab levels).**

Reason: In order to define the permission and ensure that the development is of a scale and height appropriate to the site.

- 8. G04 (Landscaping scheme (general)).**

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

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

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

10. G06 (Scope of landscaping scheme).

Reason: In order that the local planning authority may be satisfied that the deposited scheme will meet their requirements.

11. G07 (Details of earth works).

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure the preservation of the public footpath network in an acceptable manner.

12. G09 (Retention of trees/hedgerows).

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the area.

13. G22 (Tree planting).

Reason: To ensure the environment of the development is improved and enhanced.

14. G23 (Replacement of dead trees).

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the area.

15. G26 (Landscaping management plan).

Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity.

16. H03 (Visibility splays).

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

17. H05 (Access gates).

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

18. H13 (Access, turning area and parking).

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway.

19. Prior to the first use of the agricultural buildings hereby approved the existing range of buildings shown to be removed on the site plan received on 3rd December 2004 shall be permanently removed from the site and all associated plant, machinery and equipment shall be relocated to the approved farm complex.

Reason: In the interests of enhancing the visual amenity of the locality.

Informatives:

1. **HN01 - Mud on highway.**
2. **HN05 - Works within the highway.**
3. **HN10 - No drainage to discharge to highway.**
4. **ND3 – Contact Address.**
5. **N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC.**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.