

13 DCNW2006/0583/F - AMALGAMATION OF EXISTING CARAVAN SITE TO PROVIDE 25 CARAVANS AND 18 TENT PITCHES ACROSS TWO SITES, EXTENSION AND UPGRADING OF WASHROOMS TO INCLUDE FORMER WORKSHOP AREA, CHANGE OF USE OF BARN TO OFFICE FOR PLANT HIRE, CARAVAN & FARMING BUSINESSES AND CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FOR STORAGE OF 40 CARAVANS AT HOME FARM, BIRCHER, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 0AX

For: Mr B Mantle, John Amos and Co, Lion House, Broad Street, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 8BT

Date Received:
27th February 2006

Ward: Bircher

Grid Ref:
47726, 65381

Expiry Date:
24th April 2006

Local Member: Councillor S Bowen

1. Site Description and Proposal

1.1 The application site lies to the south of the village of Bircher and has a number of existing buildings and uses, including a plant hire business, caravan storage business and camping caravan site. The camping/caravan site lies in a slightly elevated position which can be seen from the adjacent highway. The Home Farm complex also includes a number of former agricultural buildings as well as the dwelling house.

1.2 Planning permission is sought for a number of proposals that are as follows:-

- The existing caravan/camping site which lies to the south of the site has permission for 12 touring caravans and 18 tent pitches. The proposal is to extend the site by 67m by 35m to the north west of the existing site and that the two sites be amalgamated. The proposal intends that the whole site would be able to provide 25 touring caravans and 18 tent pitches TOTAL across the whole site. The boundary of this extended site would be defined with a post and rail fence with hedgerow.
- Internal alterations to the existing former farm building to provide a reception, office (to serve plant hire, caravan and farming businesses), storeroom, toilet and shower facilities and a caravan/machinery store. Some minor external alterations would be required to include a brick face to existing block wall and vertical cladding to match existing to improve the external appearance of the building.
- The caravan storage use currently exists on site is restricted to specific areas of the site. The proposal includes for the change of use of an additional area of the site for the storage of additional caravans.

- 1.3 Access to the site would be via the existing access from the B4362 and on through the remaining site to the specific area allocated for this use. This access is hard surfaced.

2. Policies

2.1 Herefordshire & Worcester Council Structure Plan

Policy H16A – Development Criteria

Policy CTC13 – Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

2.2 Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)

Policy A1 – Managing the District's Assets and Resources

Policy A2(D) – Settlement Hierarchy

Policy A9 – Safeguarding the Rural Landscape

Policy A12 – New Development and Landscape Schemes

Policy A16 – Foul Drainage

Policy A36 – New Employment Generating Uses for Rural Buildings

Policy A39 – Holiday Chalet, Caravan and Camping Site

Policy A70 – Accommodating Traffic from Development

2.3 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

Policy S2 – Development Requirements

Policy S4 - Employment

Policy S7 – Natural and Historic Heritage

Policy DR1 – Design

Policy DR2 – Land Use and Activity

Policy DR13 - Noise

Policy E11 – Employment in Smaller Settlements and Open Countryside

Policy LA2 – Landscape Character

3. Planning History

- 3.1 2005/0219/F - Amalgamation of existing caravan site with an extension site in order to provide 25 caravan and 38 tent pitches across two sites. Extension and upgrading of washrooms to include former workshop area and change of use of part of barn to office for plant room, caravan and farming business - Withdrawn 22nd February 2006.
- 3.2 2004/2618/O - Site for erection of single storey dwelling - Refused 9th September 2004.
- 3.3 2003/2402/F - Removal of agricultural occupancy condition - Approved 29th September 2003.
- 3.4 2002/3616/f - Removal of agricultural occupancy condition - Withdrawn
- 3.5 1995/0955/C - Change of use of land to provide 12 pitch (touring) caravan site - 8 of these 5 pitches (touring) caravans to be used all year and provision of 18 tent pitches - Approved 20th February 1996.
- 3.6 1995/0146/C - Change of use of land to provide 12 pitch (touring) caravans - Approved 2nd May 1995.

- 3.7 91/527 - Change of use of barn and silage pit to provide caravan storage facilities - Approved with Conditions 03/10/91.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 None

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager raises no objection.

- 4.3 The Conservation Manager responded as follows:-

"No objection from an architectural point of view. Materials, finishes and details of joinery to be approved."

5. Representations

- 5.1 Croft and Yarpole Parish Council have resolved to make the following comments:-

"The Parish Council agree in principle to this application but would point out that there do not appear to be provision for disabled persons in the new facilities. In view of the proximity to residential development should arrival/departure times for caravanners be restricted by condition? The plans show storage for 80 caravans – does permission exist for 40? Clarification please."

- 5.2 Two letters of objection have been received the first from S J C Mawson and H M Mawson, 6 Old Barn Court, Bircher:-

"While we support the principle that the use of farm premises and land should be diversified, there are in our view other considerations in this case which outweigh that principle and we wish to object to the application on the following grounds.

The present caravan site occupies an elevated position in this Conservation Area and is visible from a considerable distance. It already represents a visual intrusion and its proposed extension from the present limit of, we believe, 12 caravans to the proposed number of 25 touring caravans and 18 tents, with their associated cars, would cause an unacceptable loss of visual amenity. In the case of houses nearer to it than our own, unacceptable noise and light intrusion would be added to the loss of visual amenity.

The sheer size of the proposal would constitute overdevelopment of the site, even without the proposed addition of 40 stored caravans; such industrial storage facilities would constitute a wholly inappropriate use of land in a Conservation Area.

The only exit from the site is on to the busy B4362, at a point where bends in the road make it difficult to turn out safely, even with the existing 40mph speed limit. Car/caravan combinations are a particular danger because of their overall length and this proposal would greatly increase the number of movements and therefore the danger.

For all these reasons we urge your Council to reject this proposal."

The second letter from Mr & Mrs Michael and Irene Murray who make the following comments:-

1. The caravan site is elevated and can be seen from the surrounding area, and further caravans and tents would be intrusive and unsightly in this Conservation Area.
2. The request for 25 caravan and 18 tent pitches means a possible total of 43 cars using the site, which would cause increased traffic movements onto the busy B4362, where the site exit is on a dangerous bend with reduced visibility.
3. There would be increase noise level from the site with a possible total of 80 to 150 people using the facilities.
And this noise would be 7 days a week and into the late summer evenings.
4. There would be environmental issues arising from the increase in people using the site. Has any thought been given to the increased drainage required for wastewater and sewage? Would this be done on an ad-hoc basis or an environment-aware basis? The washroom facilities would need to be floodlit, causing light pollution for the area.
5. This planning application would mean we would have to accept a further decrease in the enjoyment of our home and property.

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 main issues for consideration is the determination of this application are as follows:-

- a) Principle of use of land use for caravan park and caravan storage
- b) Landscape impact of the caravan park extension
- c) Landscape impact of caravan storage area
- d) Impact on the character of the listed building and Conservation Area
- e) Highway safety

6.2 The application site lies to the west of the B4326, and is one of the first properties as you as you enter Bircher from the south. There is no defined settlement boundary for Bircher but the site clearly relates to the cluster of houses in the village. Policy A2(D), A36 of the Leominster District Local Plan make provision for the re-use of rural buildings for employment generating uses. The site already accommodates both the caravan/camping site and caravan storage. The approval of this application would facilitate the expansion of the caravan site, the knock on effect being that the facilities require upgrading. The internal changes to the building also offer the opportunity to remove the portacabin, currently used as an office by the plant hire business. The remainder of this barn retains its planning permission to store up to 35 caravans within the building. This application is for the storage of an additional 40 caravans within the yard area, which lies immediately to the west (rear) of the barn and is surrounded by a bund and recently planted landscaping. The buildings and yard were formally used for agricultural purposes, with the building also being used for caravan storage, the building is suitable for the use proposed with some minor amendments to improve the internal and external appearances of the building. Policy E11 of the Unitary Development (Plan (Revised Deposit Draft) also supports

commercial uses, subject to the use not having an adverse impact upon the local environment, the road network or amenity.

- 6.3 The site has successfully accommodated a small caravan site to the south of the buildings associated with Home Farm. Policy A39 of the Leominster District Local Plan makes allowances and encourages extensions to existing caravan sites subject to meeting the criteria relating to the landscape impact.
- 6.4 The site lies within an area designated as open countryside and as such the protection of the rural landscape is of particular importance. The part of the application site which would accommodate the caravan storage area are site in an area which has previously been cut away is significantly lower than the surrounding field level. The proposal does not involve any further encroachment into the countryside and reads as part of the yard and backdrop of buildings. The mature trees and hedgerow to the north of the site provide a very effective screen and backdrop to the site. Planting and further bunding has recently been undertaken which further screens this part of the site as well as the Plant Hire business and barns. The site itself, is not visually prominent or obtrusive, and is typical of a farmyard arrangement. The retention of this landscaping can be conditioned. As such the provision of the additional space for the storage provision of up to 40 caravans would not have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of the area, accords with Policy A9 of the Leominster District Local Plan.
- 6.5 In relation to the extended caravan site, this would allow for the siting of 25 touring caravans and 18 tent pitches at any one time. An increase of 13 touring caravans in relation to their existing permission. The permission is also the subject of conditions which restrict the times that caravans can use the site. These conditions would be re-imposed on any permission granted. This element of the site would be more visually prominent than the adjacent storage site and does not currently benefit from any landscaping. A fence forms the existing caravan site boundary of the site. The extension of the caravan park would not cause anymore harm and offers the opportunity to provide some hedging/screening to soften the appearance. As such and subject to the provision of a hedgerow and suitable landscaping, the proposal would comply with Policies A9 and A39 of the Leominster District Local Plan.
- 6.6 There are two listed buildings in the vicinity of the application site, Bircher Hall, that lies, behind a line of mature trees, in a slightly elevated position approximately 65m to the North, and the 'Dovecote', which lies approximately 50m to the west beyond the existing buildings. The proposed caravan storage area is relatively hidden within the site and the extended caravan site is also partially hidden. And offers the opportunity for landscaping. As such the proposal preserves the character and appearance of the setting of these listed buildings in accordance with local plan Policy A18 and national guidance contained within Planning Policy Guidance 15.
- 6.7 Access to the site is via the existing access from the B4326. This access serves a number of uses including the dwelling, caravan park, caravan storage area and plant hire business. Resident's concerns relating to an increase in use have been carefully considered, and the speed and use of the main road taken into account. The fact that the access is existing and has also been taken into account. The Traffic Manager raises no objection to this development and it is considered that a reason for refusal on highway safety ground could not be sustained.

- 6.8 With regards to the impact on the neighbouring properties, the proposal involves areas of the site that are not immediately adjacent to neighbouring properties. Even though this would intensify the uses on the site it is not considered to be detrimental to the neighbouring properties.
- 6.9 To conclude, the proposal is considered to comply with policies which seek to re-use existing buildings in the open countryside for commercial purposes without detriment to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, setting of the listed buildings or landscape quality. As such the proposal is recommended for approval with the appropriate conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted with 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 - This permission shall be implemented in lieu of, and not in addition to the planning permission 95/0955/C dated 20th February 1996 which relates to the caravan/camping sites.

Reason: To clarify the terms of this permission.

4 - No more than 25 touring caravan and 18 tent pitches shall be allowed on site at any one time.

Reason: To define the terms of the permission in the interests of visual amenity.

5 - No more than 5 touring caravans or tents shall be allowed on site between the 30th November and 1st March.

Reason: To protect the visual amenities of the area during the winter months when caravans would be particularly visible in the local landscape.

6 - No more than 40 caravans shall be stored in the area marked in blue on the approved plans.

Reason: To clarify the terms of the permission and agreed area for the storage of caravans.

7 - G01 (Details of boundary treatments)

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure dwellings have satisfactory privacy.

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.

INFORMATIVES:

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

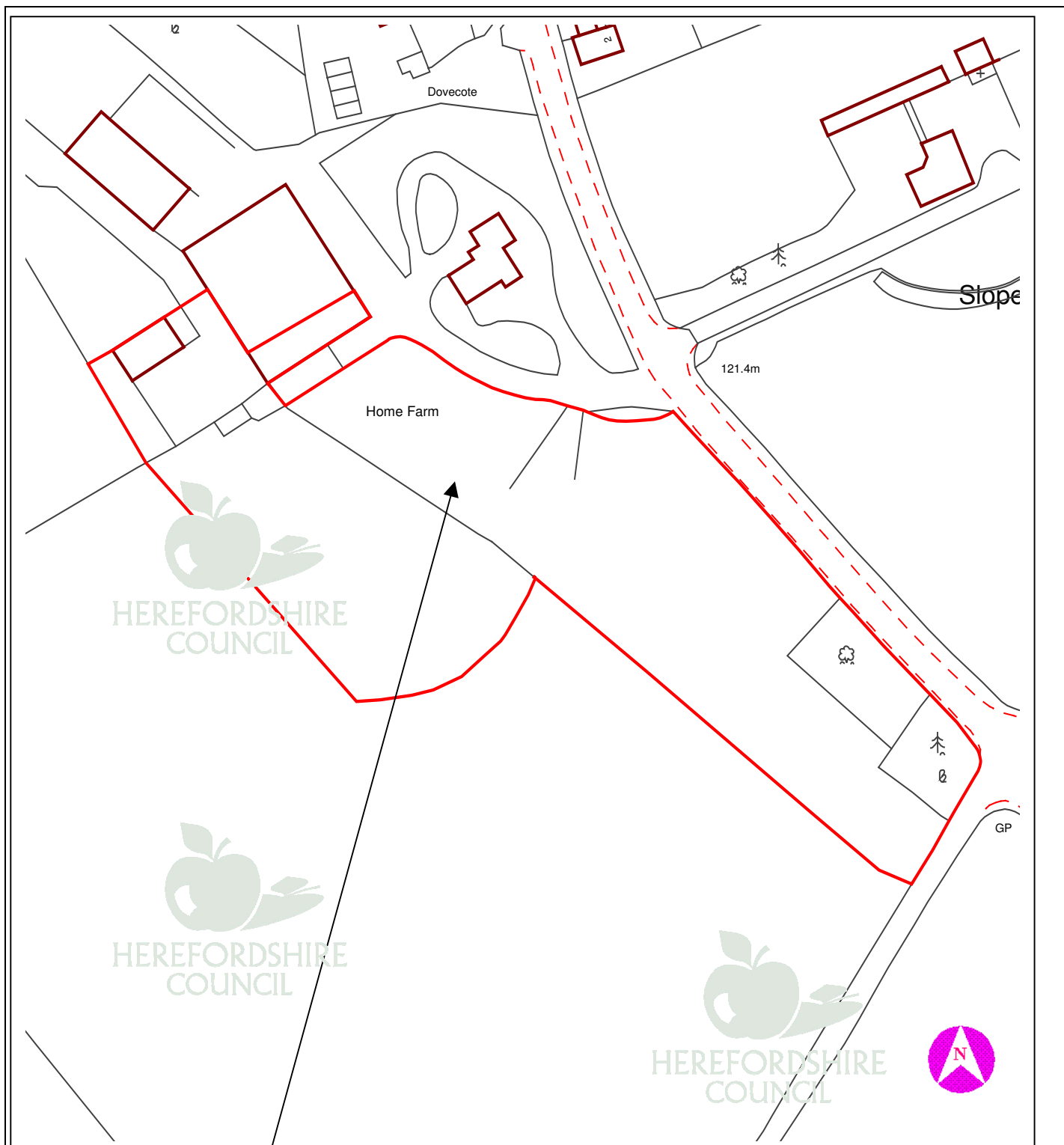
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCNW2006/0583/F

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : Home Farm, Bircher, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0AX

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