

7 DCNE2006/2156/F - CHANGE OF USE OF ORCHARD TO PRIVATE WINTER CARAVAN STORAGE (TEMPORARY), ANCILLARY TO SIDDINGTON FARM AT SIDDINGTON FARM, LEDDINGTON, LEDBURY, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR8 2LN

For: G & B B Houlbrooke & Son per Stansgate Planning Consultants, Conrad House, Birmingham Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 0AA

Date Received:

4th July 2006

Expiry Date:

3rd October 2006

Ward: Ledbury

Grid Ref:

69833, 35649

Local Members: Councillor PE Harling, Councillor DW Rule, Councillor BF Ashton

This application was deferred at the last meeting for a site inspection by Members of the Northern Area Planning Sub-Committee.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site lies to the south of Orham Road within the Ledbury Parish. The site of approximately 2.08 hectares is sited to the west of the long-standing group of Farm buildings including the main Farmhouse. Vehicular access to the site is achieved from Orham Road to the north.
- 1.2 The applicant's operate an agricultural holding at Siddington Farm with an area of some 101 hectares of which 40 hectares are devoted to growing strawberries. A further 32 hectares are rented at Lintridge Farm and 8 hectares at Toney's Farm, Bromsberrow.
- 1.3 The growing of strawberries is a highly labour intensive operation and amounts to a significant proportion of the 270 workers upon the Farm. The growing season runs from February to November and the picking season runs from May to November. The fruit pickers originate from abroad, mostly Eastern Europe.
- 1.4 There are 69 caravans upon the site.

- 1.5 The pattern of worker numbers and the number of caravans occupied is detailed in the table below: -

MONTH	NUMBER OF MIGRANT WORKERS	NUMBER OF CARAVANS OCCUPIED
January	0	0
February	9	3
March	23	7
April	35	10
May	49	15
June	280	69
July	260	65
August	249	63
September	200	50
October	51	15
November	30	10
December	0	0

- 1.6 It must be recognised that the residential occupation of caravans by seasonal workers is a lawful use of land not requiring the benefit of planning permission. In addition the agent for the applicant claims that 40 caravans have been stored on the site all year round when not required by seasonal agricultural workers for a period in excess of ten years and as such their storage is lawful. However, since the last Northern Area Planning Sub-Committee I have received a telephone call from a local resident disputing this claim and stating that in her opinion the number that have been stored upon the site for a period in excess of ten years may be in the region of 15. The applicant has not legally established this by way of a Certificate of Lawful Development under Section 191 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Therefore for the purposes of this report I shall disregard this claim.
- 1.7 Therefore in essence the proposal is to store the following number of caravans in each month when agricultural workers do not occupy them: -

January	69
February	66
March	62
April	59
May	54
June	0
July	4
August	6
September	19
October	54
November	59
December	69

- 1.8 The applicant is willing to accept a temporary planning permission.

2. Policies

2.1 Central Government Advice

Planning Policy Statement 1 – ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’
 Planning Policy Statement 7 – ‘Sustainable Development in Rural Areas’
 Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 – Transport’

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan – June 1993

Policy CTC.9 – Development Requirements

2.3 Malvern Hills District Local Plan 1998

Landscape Policy 1
Landscape Policy 7
Landscape Policy 8

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan May 2004

S1 – Sustainable Development
LA2 – Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
LA6 – Landscaping Schemes

3. Planning History

3.1 None directly relevant.

4. Consultation SummaryStatutory Consultations

4.1 None

Internal Council Advice

4.2 The County Land Agent is of the view that the caravans upon the site are reasonably necessary to accommodate seasonal agricultural workers for the majority of the year.

4.3 The Transportation Manager has no objections to the proposed development.

5. Representations

5.1 Ledbury Town Council "recommend refusal". They have not stated the reason(s) why they wish to see the application refused.

5.2 The occupier of 'Park Barn Farm', Near Parkway, Ledbury objects to the proposed development on the basis of its visual impact. She is of the view that if permission is to be granted the site should be the subject of an extensive landscaping scheme.

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 site lies outside of any defined settlement and as such lies within the open countryside in planning policy terms. The majority of the caravans are reasonably required to accommodate agricultural workers the majority of the year. This does not require the benefit of planning permission. The issue then arises as to where to store the caravans when they are not required to accommodate the agricultural workers. It is

my view that it is reasonable in principle to continue to store them upon this same site for the following reasons: -

- Evidence suggests that the site may already have a lawful use for the storage of 40 caravans;
- I am not aware of any other site in the wider Ledbury area that has the benefit of planning permission for the storage of up to 29 caravans;
- If one were to require the storage of these caravans off-site it would necessitate the following movements of caravans around the surrounding rural highway network: -

February – 3 caravans in
March - 4 caravans in
April – 3 caravans in
May – 5 caravans in
June - 54 caravans in
July – 4 caravans out
August - 2 caravans out
September – 13 caravans out
October – 35 caravans out
November – 5 caravans out
December – 10 caravans out

It should be noted that these caravans are not ordinary touring caravans but the larger static caravans.

- The storage of these caravans in another location would represent an unsustainable pattern of development. It would require the use of a heavy transporter vehicle with the resultant CO2 emissions. Clearly such trips could be avoided if the caravans are stored upon the site.
- 6.2 The issue that then needs to be addressed is the visual impact of these stored caravans. The siting of the caravans upon the site in close proximity to the Farmhouse and the long-established range of agricultural buildings is both logical from a functional viewpoint and from a visual view. It is both traditional and appropriate to group Farm buildings and other associated development together. Furthermore the caravans stored upon this site do not project above any skyline.
- 6.3 Nevertheless whilst these caravans are not too visible from short distant public vantage points they are readily visible from long-distant vantage points. For example they are readily visible from the A417 to the east and south-east. The impact of these caravans upon the Leadon Valley requires mitigation. I consider that this could be achieved by way of appropriate indigenous planting.
- 6.4 Whilst the applicant has stated a willingness to accept a temporary planning I still consider that a landscaping condition is fully justified. It is evident that there have been a considerable number of caravans stored upon this site over a number of years and I find it unlikely that on the balance of probabilities the agricultural activities on the holding are likely to materially change in the short-term.
- 6.5 I would envisage the landscaping to comprise of indigenous species and to include strategic structural planting, hedgerow planting and tree planting within the site itself.
- 6.6 I therefore recommend that a conditional temporary planning permission be granted.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:-

- 1 - The use hereby permitted shall cease and the caravans removed from the land prior to 1st March 2012.

Reason: In order that the agricultural need for the caravans upon the site can be reviewed.

- 2 - Prior to 22nd December 2006 the applicant or any other person(s) carrying out the development hereby permitted shall submit and obtain the written approval of the Local Planning Authority in respect of a scheme of landscaping using indigenous species. This landscaping scheme shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained. The submitted scheme of landscaping must include details as to the location of all planting, the species, their size and the density of planting.

Reason: To ensure that the visual impact of the development upon the wider landscape is satisfactorily mitigated.

- 3 - All planting comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out prior to 1st March 2007. Any trees or plants which within the period until 1st March 2012 die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure that the visual impact of the development upon the wider landscape is satisfactorily mitigated.

- 4 - There shall be no more than 69 caravans upon the site at any one time.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside.

- 5 - No external lighting shall be installed upon the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside.

INFORMATIVES:

- 1 - N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC
- 2 - In respect of the landscaping scheme required to be submitted pursuant to condition 2 the applicant is advised to engage the services of a suitably qualified landscape architect. The person appointed to prepare the landscaping scheme is advised to view the site from both short distances and long distances (including the A417 to the east and south-east). They are also advised to liaise closely with the Council's Landscape Officer (Juliet Wheatley - 01432-260157 - jwheatley@herefordshire.gov.uk).

3 - For the avoidance of any doubt the plans to which this decision relate are:-

Application Site Plan Dwg No 4787/1 received 21 June 2006;
Drawing No 9146/1 received 21 June 2006;
Drawing No 91456/2 received 21 June 2006.

4 - With regard any details submitted at a later date pursuant to condition 5 above the Local Planning Authority would advise the applicant to engage the services of a suitably qualified engineer (Institute of Lighting Engineers) and they would require the following details:

- Details as to the location of each luminaire supporting structure together with the number of lights upon each structure;
- Details of lighting columns or supporting structures (e.g. height, material, colour);
- Details of each luminaire (i.e. lamp wattage, 'flat-glass design', forward throw projector);
- The mounting height of each luminaire;
- The tilt angle of each luminaire (n.b. the Local Planning Authority would recommend 0 degrees - i.e. parallel to the ground);
- The rotational angle of each luminaire;
- An appropriately scaled metric block plan detailing the resultant lux levels on the ground.

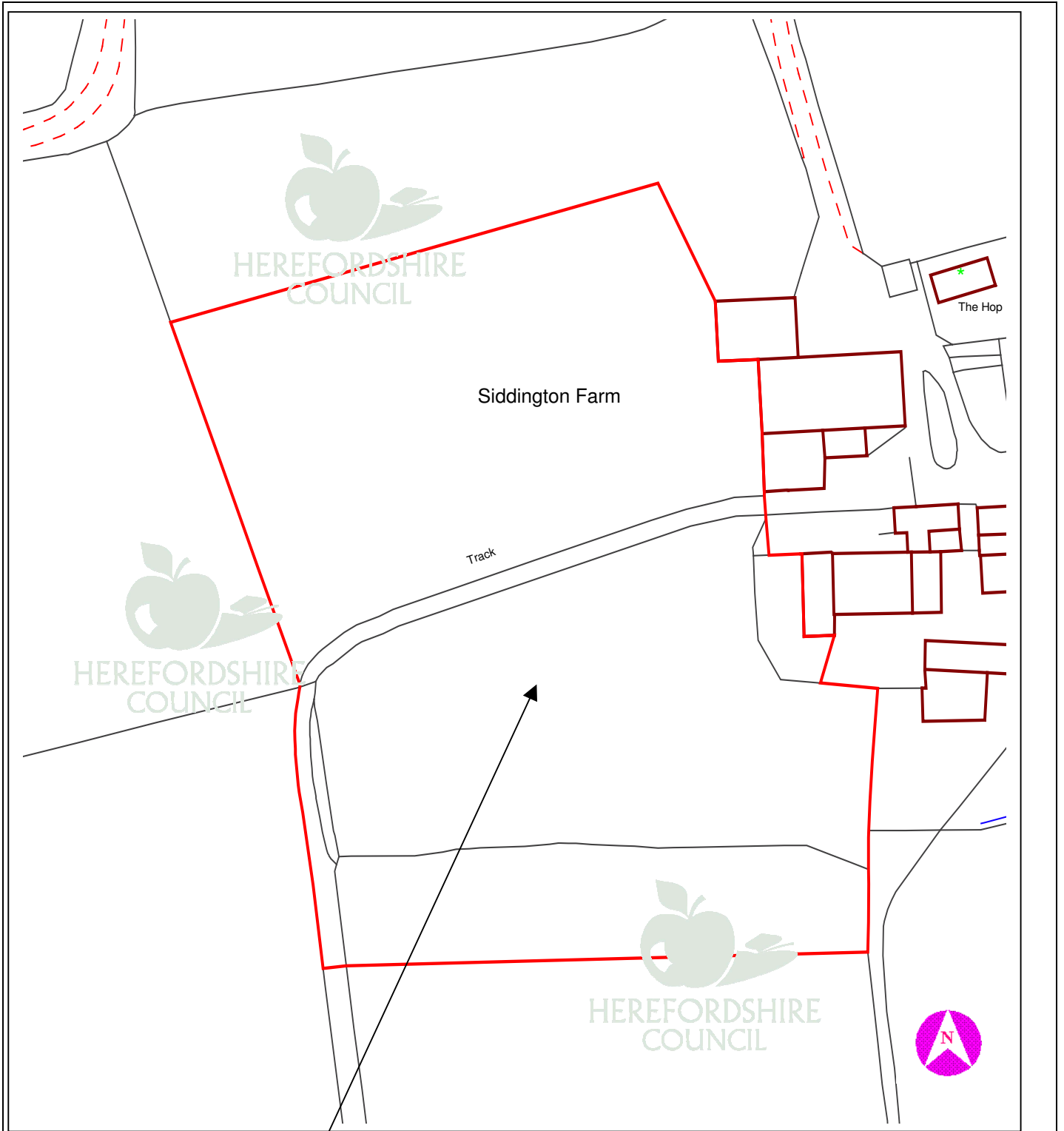
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCNE2006/2156/F

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : Siddington Farm, Leddington, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2LN

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