

OTTERHEAD
(Stockland)

08/1195/FUL

Target Date: 1 July 2008

Applicant:

Mr R Bright

Location:

Broadhayes Farm, Stockland

Proposal:

Proposed expansion of workshop and machinery storage buildings

CONSULTATIONS

County Highway Authority

The existing workshop and machinery storage buildings are accessed from an unclassified road in very close proximity to its junction with the C301 classified County Road. The site access has limited visibility from and of emerging vehicles as does the highway junction and I would not wish to see an increase traffic accessing and egressing the site. The applicant has provided no information for existing and proposed vehicle numbers which I consider essential in assessing this application. The applicant should also consider improvements to visibility at the site access. The applicant should submit the required additional information without which the recommendation is likely to be a refusal.

Agricultural Assessor

The Agricultural Assessor concludes that if the applicant is correct in saying “whilst it is not possible or proposed to store all machinery and equipment under cover, this proposal aims to provide sufficient shelter and workshop space for repairs and seasonal storage” and “the building shown on the application has been designed to provide the minimum requirement to satisfy the farm’s need in this respect” then the proposals could be quite genuine particularly if all of the 210 acres of the farm is under corn and other crops and that the applicant has all the necessary machinery and does not use contractors. The size of the existing machinery workshop and barn appears to be inadequate at present.

PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council objects to further development of this site and considers the proposed buildings are too high and intensive to the visual amenity of the neighbourhood.

WARD MEMBER(S)

The initial comments of the Ward Member (Cllr Key) are -

Original response – I am very concerned about the excessive size of this additional building as well as the height. As there are existing buildings on this site a much smaller building would be acceptable.

Amended response – I wish to withdraw my previous report having now visited the site and had information that was not previously available. I have no problem in agreeing with this application which will also tidy up the site.

In the event that this application comes to Committee I would reserve my position until I am in full possession of all the relevant facts and arguments for and against.

REPRESENTATIONS

Objections

4 letters have been received raising the following points:

- The applicant has recently had two applications approved for storage and machinery at the Ridge site. Machinery is currently adequately stored there.
- Visual impact – the building will be above the roofline with the existing building. However it will be sunken in to the ground at 4 metres along our boundary.
- The applicant will be removing a lot of sub soil and it seems inappropriate to dig such a large hole for a building. This could be better achieved by cut and fill and having the floor level higher. This excess material should not be employed to raise general ground levels in other areas of the farm, specifically to fill in the areas created as landscaping bunds.
- The applicant removed the hedge at the rear of the existing workshops in 1995 (photographs provided).
- The application trespasses on to the neighbour's land in the south east corner of the application site where the boundary agreed by Court order is a straight line.
- The proposed development is in danger of de-stabilising our property as the development will not be subject to Building Control.
- The applicant is in breach of many other conditions on previous permissions and no approval should be given until these issues have been resolved.
- The proposed development is too close to the boundary of the property to allow for adequate screening, the former Devon hedgebank removed by the applicant should be reinstated and the development moved further north to allow for this.
- The excavation is excessive and should be reduced to a cut and fill exercise only.
- The height of the building is excessive for a machinery store or workshop. This is not agriculture but more akin to an industrial estate.
- The proposal would be contrary to the need to rationalise the existing pig complex as it would prejudice the opportunities to expand those activities to the west and away from the settlement and would put more pressure for expansion to the east.
- The applicant should be required to submit a Business Plan for the whole farm so that all the proposals can be considered as part of a comprehensive scheme instead of on a piecemeal basis.
- The application for building number 12 on the main complex claims the need for storage for hay, straw and other feed products in the vicinity of the units. The site of this application should be reserved for that purpose.
- The building is more than 2 metres higher than the existing building and they will therefore be considerably more intrusive into the countryside. This land is an AONB and therefore the effect on the landscape should be considered very seriously. Any decision has to be balanced with the gain and the economic benefit which in this case does not appear to be apparent.
- The footprint of the principal building would be more than twice that of the existing building and with the contiguous ancillary buildings and covered storage areas the overall footprint would be four times the size of the existing. This will create a very dominant and intrusive structure.
- Development should be redesigned as a series of smaller separate buildings with lower ridge lines which should have far less intrusive effect on the AONB.
- The building and associated impermeable hardstandings will create a very substantial area to be drained. The run-off from this impermeable surface will have to be accommodated by a single 450mm drain which runs beneath our property. This drain already regularly runs at full bore during times of heavy rain and we therefore believe this development will pose a serious flood risk to our property.
- No mention is made of oil or petrol interceptors being included as part of the development despite the intention to use the area for storing machinery. We believe the development therefore poses significant pollution risk.

- The failure of the applicant to properly maintain ditches has caused flooding to adjoining properties in the past.
- As has been the case with the previous applications on this site the plans give no indication of the intended slab levels of these buildings. Historically the applicant has taken advantage of permissions for new buildings to import vast quantities of waste materials to create raised plateaus on which to construct the building. This has increased the intrusiveness of the development in the AONB and in relation to the adjoining residential properties and involved very substantial vehicle movements on local roads.
- The persistent applications over recent times are of such an extreme nature as to convert the environmental sensitive area into an industrial estate where none has been nor should be authorised.

Policies and Guidance

National Policies

PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas)
PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment)

Devon Structure Plan Policies

C01 (Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness)
C03 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
C07 (Historic Settlements and Buildings)

Local Plan Policies

EN1 (Development Affecting Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
S5 (Countryside Protection)
TA7 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access)

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Broadhayes is a small historic settlement situated in the countryside within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Five of the buildings in the hamlet are listed as being of special architectural or historic merit including Broadhayes House which is a Grade II* Listed Building. Broadhayes Farm is a 44 hectare arable and pig unit based in the hamlet and the farm complex is on the opposite side of the road from the farmhouse and what was an area of park land but is now partially raised plateau of land with pig buildings on it and silos, unevenly graded down towards Wellands, a thatched cottage on the south western end of the farmyard area. To the south of the plateau is Goren Farm which is also a Listed Building and contains a County Wildlife Site.

The site, the subject of this application, stands at the junction of the C classification road leading eastwards to Broadhayes cross and the unclassified road going southwards to Lower Ridge past Goren Farm. This separate part of the farm complex currently holds two large agricultural buildings with a floor area of approximately 186 square metres and in which it is possible to store large agricultural equipment – as can be seen from the attached photographs. The site has a generally cluttered appearance containing equipment and a stock pile of stone which forms part of the Broadhayes business i.e. reclaimed stone sales.

The access to the site through the existing hedge line has limited visibility as described by the Highway Authority.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is intended to extend the existing farm machinery storage barn (containing the combine harvester and tractor in the photographs) and the existing workshop adjoining it with a further workshop extension to the south and a large machinery storage and workshop to the west. The total area of proposed new buildings is approximately 306 square metres. It is then intended to also construct a further 241 square metres of covered storage to the west and north of the new machinery storage and workshop building and to the east of the new workshop extension.

CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Background

This farm complex has a considerable history relating to the construction of the plateau requiring consent from the Waste Planning Authority, Devon County Council, and for the numerous big related buildings on the plateau dealt with by this Council. However, this application relates to a small area of land separated from the main complex by a narrow lane going southwards to Lower Ridge. The photographs attached to this report show that its presently occupied by a large timber barn, capable of storing a combine harvester and tractor and by a smaller structure with a roller shutter door also capable of storing large agricultural machinery. The area around it is occupied by various pieces of equipment and is the focus of a reclaimed stone business that also runs from the farm.

Impact on the AONB

The proposed buildings as described above are extremely large and extensive when including the covered yard areas. The proposed building is more than 2 metres higher than the existing building and will have an intrusive effect upon the AONB. There is a history on the holding of an appeal inspector refusing a barn on a lower part of the holding, i.e. not on the plateau, because of its detrimental effect upon the AONB. In October 2005 an appeal was dismissed against the relocation of a straw barn at the very lowest corner of the complex and the Inspector made the following comments:-

“The group of buildings [on the plateau] and the associated slurry pit, pig paddocks and access track are very noticeable features and in my opinion they have a damaging visual impact on the character and appearance of the area. This impact is experienced in both short and long term views and is not materially reduced by the planting bunds that have been created which are themselves seen as somewhat alien features in the landscape. If a large new building were to be erected further to the east as proposed, although it would be on lower ground level than much of the complex, I consider that it would be still conspicuous and intrusive in itself, and would significantly add to the harmful, visual effect of the existing development.... My overall view is that the proposed new building would be detrimental to the natural beauty and landscape qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the special historic character of the settlement and the wider setting of the Listed Buildings. The proposals would therefore be contrary to the aims of National and Local Policies which set out safeguards in respect of these matters as indicated above. It would not be possible to off-set my concerns by any conditions that might reasonably be attached to a planning permission and my conclusion is that the appeal should not succeed....”

The same arguments apply to the current application and whilst not wishing to inhibit the farming activity or the reclaimed stone business the scale of the proposed buildings in this particularly sensitive landscape does give rise to concern. The footprint of the principal building would be more than twice that of the existing building and with the contiguous ancillary buildings and covered storage areas the overall footprint would be four times the size of the existing. This will create a very dominant and intrusive structure. It has been suggested that redesigning the development as a series of smaller separate buildings with lower ridge lines would have a far

less intrusive impact on the AONB and could be considered as an alternative should the applicant wish to negotiate via the 'pre-app' system.

The building and associated impermeable hardstandings will create a very substantial area to be drained. There is no information in the documentation about any studies that have been carried out to ensure that the existing drainage facilities (an open ditch is shown on the drawings) are adequate for such a greatly increased rate of run-off and to improve the drainage to ensure that the adjoining roads and properties are not flooded. However, the issue of the drainage and of the absence of slab levels on the drawings could be dealt with by conditions. Nevertheless overall the impact of such a substantial set of structures in an area where the Planning Inspectorate has already expressed its concern over the damage done by the complex would be damaging and therefore contrary to all the relevant policies of protecting designated landscapes.

In addition the Highway Authority is not satisfied with the access from this corner site from an unclassified road, very close to its proximity to the junction with the C3015 classified county road particularly if it is to be used for large vehicles as there is limited visibility from and of emerging vehicles. Consequently there is a highway objection to the proposed scheme.

RECOMMENDATION REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The site lies within an area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the proposal would be contrary to the policy for such areas as defined by the County Structure Plan in Policy CDE3 and Local Plan Policy EN1 by reason of the mass, scale and height of the building as proposed resulting in a damaging effect upon the character and appearance of this designated landscape.
2. The proposal is accessed from an unclassified road in very close proximity to its junction with the CO1 classified county road and the site access as limited visibility from and of emerging vehicles as does the highway junction and any increase in use and in consequence of this access and of the approach roads would result in danger and inconvenience to users of the highway contrary to East Devon Local Plan Policy TA7 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access).

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report