

Woodbury (Raleigh) 05/0686/COU (FULL) 03.05.05

Applicant: EBCS Leisure

Location: Land at (EBCS Leisure) Greendale Business Park (NGR: 0189789750)

Proposal: Extension to caravan storage area

Consultations

County Highway Authority
Does not wish to comment.

Environment Agency
No objection in principle. However the site is located within 250m of a landfill site and appropriate conditions are recommended.

South West Water
No objection.

Most Relevant Planning History

App. No	Year	Proposal	Date and Decision
04/P2420	2004	Provision of parking	Dismissed 06.07.05
04/P2405	2004	Erection of building/access/parking	31.05.05 Approved DC
03/P0415	2003	Erection of building for tyre distributor	25.03.03 Approved
02/P2337	2002	Erection of building for tyre distributor	26.11.02 Approved
01/P1994	2001	Change of use to allow for storage and	Allowed at Appeal
01/P0663	2001	Erection of Industrial Building	03.08.01 Approved
00/P0331	2000	Extension to lorry park	16.05.00 Approved

Parish Council

The Parish Council recommends refusal on the following grounds:

- The proposed site is outside the designated development boundary; it would have an undesirable impact upon the village and the screening is inadequate.

Ward Member(s)

Councillor A Liverton recommends approval. "This is an application to expand an existing successful business. It is well outside the village boundary, which means it has no impact on the village, either visually or with respect to increased traffic which is directed away from the village. Although outside of the development area, this is next to another site which is used for commercial enterprise. The usage would be seasonal and for winter storage only. The field in question would be virtually empty from Easter until October. The applicant has plans to screen the proposed site with an earthbank. In order to encourage local small businesses I feel we should consider this application favourably and weigh the policy guidance against the economic well being of the area."

Introduction

The application site lies approximately 1 kilometre to the north east of the village of Woodbury Salterton. The applicant's premises are currently located within the Greendale Barton industrial estate which is a designated employment area in the emerging Local Plan. The industrial estate is an isolated grouping of large industrial buildings and grain silos, surrounded by open countryside. There has been rapid sporadic piecemeal development on the Greendale Barton site over recent years. The proposed application site lies outside the confines of the boundary of

the industrial estate as designated in the Inset Map of the emerging East Devon Local Plan and abounds fields and open land.

The Proposed Development

The applicant has submitted a supporting statement to justify the development of adjoining land to their existing premises within the Greendale Barton site. EBCS was formed in 1992 and now has three distinct sides. The used caravan recycling division collects caravans from parks throughout the South West and refurbishes these, of which 90% are for export, the remaining 10% being used for home build or short term accommodation. The statement indicates that the new "import" Division will expand rapidly with distribution rights. The company employs directly and indirectly a total of 25 people, including upholsterers, carpenters, electricians, accounts and administration staff etc.

The applicant states that the proposed expansion is required partly due to the increased turnover, but also van sizes have increased over the last 10 years or so which requires additional space for turning and storage.

Full planning permission is therefore sought to extend the site to the west of the existing caravan storage area and the north of the approved recycling centre. The development would be enclosed by a 2m high palisade fence with a pair of gates 6.0m wide providing access to the existing access track. The ground within the compound would be formed in hardcore and raised to same level as access road and turning area.

Planning Policy

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Guidance 4: Industrial, commercial development and small firms
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

Devon Structure Plan (2001-2016)

- ST1 (Sustainable Development)
- ST5 (Development Priority 2001 to 2016)
- C06 - Quality of New Development
- C014 – Conserving Agricultural Land)

East Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) September 2003

- D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness)
- E6 Small Scale Employment in Rural Areas)
- S4 (Countryside Protection)
- D4 (Landscape Requirements)
- TA1 (Accessibility of New Development)
- TA6 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access)

Observations

The main issues for consideration are the policy considerations relating to the position of the proposed storage in relation to the boundary of the employment site (and therefore the impact of the expansion on the character and appearance of the area), the policy provisions regarding expansion of rural businesses, the ability for businesses to expand and the justification for the expansion.

Location

The site of the proposed expansion falls outside the defined employment boundary as designated in the emerging East Devon Local Plan – Inset Map 27b. There have been representations via the development plan process to the Local Plan's boundary definition of the business park. The Local Plan is currently going through the final stages towards adoption at Public Inquiry and as such the policies within it should be afforded significant weight. This document also accords with the main aims of the Devon Structure Plan, regional and national planning guidance. These documents place significant emphasis on the protection of the countryside and location of businesses in sustainable locations.

Whilst it could be argued that the access link and close proximity to the A3052 is a positive element with regard to sustainability, the existing employment site has a defined boundary which helps identify the distinction between employment land and open countryside. It is accepted that the Inset Map 27b, which has been revised to overcome the imprecision of the Proposals Map annotation of Greendale Barton, provides a less than clear picture of the existing boundary with respect to the buildings on the ground or live planning permissions. An updated and annotated copy of the existing situation is attached for Members information. It is clear from that plan that the proposed site is located outside of the defined boundary of the site. Hence, the proposal must carefully be considered in terms of its impact and potential precedence for further expansion of this site.

Economic Development

The applicant states that the business has expanded rapidly since its commencement at Greendale Barton and the number of staff employed has risen. The Ward Members comment supports the view that the business has assisted in the diversification of the local economy. It is necessary to weigh up the proposed benefit in economic terms for the local economy against the adverse impact of the development upon the rural character and appearance of the development.

Planning Policy E6 (Small Scale Employment Development in Rural Areas) recognises that expansion of existing rural business can be permitted. However this policy is limited to businesses within or adjoining villages or built up area boundaries, or within existing sites. Despite the assertion that the application complies with Policy E6 it is considered that an area, which is located outside a defined site, and within an agricultural field, does not constitute an existing site, and as such the application cannot be considered acceptable under this Policy.

Relevant Planning History

Members should be of the relevant planning history on the site. To the south of the proposed site a recycling centre has been granted consent by Devon County (04/P2405). The existing caravan storage area to the east of the application site was allowed on appeal following refusal at Development Control Committee on 05.06.02. The Inspector considered that the 'limited amount of land raising that is proposed (a maximum of 5 metres), together with the modest height of the mobile homes themselves, would prevent the development from appearing as an unduly prominent feature'. The Inspector considered that the two belts of trees to the west of the site would in due course further reduce the prominence of the proposal. The Inspector also considered that there was a lack of alternative sites within the district to accommodate the business.

However, the proof of evidence submitted on behalf of the Local Planning Authority to the Public Inquiry of the Local Plan with respect to employment land at Greendale Barton states 'there is vacant land and premises elsewhere in the District'. Furthermore 'It is not accepted that it is an appropriate location for further employment land'.

To the east of the Industrial Estate a recent application for additional parking provision outside the defined boundary has been refused 04/P2420 and dismissed at appeal on 06.07.05 (see attached annotated site plan). The Inspector dismissed the appeal on the grounds that 'the additional parking would have an unacceptable adverse effect on the character and appearance of the countryside'.

Highways Authority

There are no adverse comments from the Highways Authority and Greendale Barton is served by a dedicated access road to the A3052.

Character and Appearance

The site lies on lower lying ground in the valley of Grindle Brook. The site viewed from the south sits down in the landscape and is seen against the higher land to the north, south and east. However the site is open to views from the west. The site would be raised considerably to the same level of the access road to the east and would as a result make the development more prominent in the landscape. There is a belt of native landscaping which is developing approximately 13.0m to the west of the site, however this offers little screening at present. There is a more mature and dense hedgerow to the south west. The proposed site extension would follow the boundary line of the recently approved (04/P2405) recycling building. It is noted that there were no landscape conditions imposed on this approval. This does not provide any precedent for further expansion of the site as the policies relating to waste development allow for the use of sites in locations where other developments may not be appropriate.

It is considered that as the proposed expansion would necessitate an increase in ground levels, timber fencing and a further incursion into open land, would represent an intrusive form of development outside of the defined boundary for the site which would harm the character and rural appearance of the surrounding countryside. Additionally, acceptance of such a incursion could provide an undesirable precedent for other areas of the site, at a time when the issue of site's boundary is being considered at the Public Local Inquiry.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity

It is considered there would be no impact upon the residential amenity of local residents given the isolated position of the development and the existing link road to the A3052 would ensure there would be no additional traffic movements through the village.

Conclusion

Careful consideration has been given to the nature of the site, economic need of the applicants business and the character and appearance of the area. The site has a defined boundary, and expansion of this is to be considered by Public Local Inquiry into the emerging East Devon Local Plan. Whilst approval has been granted to develop beyond the site for the Waste Transfer building, Devon County Council policy allows for this to happen where no other suitable sites are available. It is considered for the reasons outlined that the proposed site expansion would have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the wider countryside and whilst the economic argument of the Ward Member and applicant are noted this does not override the landscape concerns of the proposed development. It is considered that the existing caravan storage is an incongruous and intrusive form of development detracting from the character and appearance of the site and the further expansion into open countryside should be strongly resisted. As such it is recommended the application be refused based upon the impact on the character and appearance of the area, and the fact that it would be premature for the Authority to approve an expansion beyond existing limits prior to the completion of the Local Plan Inquiry.

Recommendation

REFUSE for the reasons given below

1. The proposed development of the existing operation beyond the existing defined boundaries of the site would represent an intrusive form of development detracting from the rural character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. The development would therefore be contrary to the provisions of Policies ST1 (Sustainable Development), ST5 (Development Priority 2001 to 2016), C06 Quality of New Development and C014 Conserving Agricultural Land) of the Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016 and Policies D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness), E6 Small Scale Employment in Rural Areas) S4 (Countryside Protection) and D4 (Landscape Requirements) of the Revised Deposit of the East Devon Local Plan – September 2003.
2. The expansion of the existing industrial site is to be considered at the Public Local Inquiry. As such it is considered premature to allow further incursion beyond the existing site boundary. The proposal is therefore not in accordance with guidance in PPS1.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATION:

- Enforcement Action Required
- It is considered that should members be minded to refuse the application that an enforcement notice be served to reinstate the land to its former agricultural condition within **3 months** of the date of the refusal notice.

List of background papers

The file containing all letters, consultations and documents referred to in the report