



Committee Report

Planning Committee North - 10 November 2020

Application no DC/20/2440/FUL

Location

Country Cottage
Black Street
Gisleham
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR33 8EN

Expiry date 26 August 2020

Application type Full Application

Applicant Mr John Peak

Parish Gisleham

Proposal Construction of building for storage of wood and equipment in association with the management of woodland at Home Covert

Case Officer Mark Brands
mark.brands@eastssuffolk.gov.uk

1. Summary

- 1.1 This planning application is for the construction of a building for storage of wood and equipment in association with the management of woodland at Home Covert.
- 1.2 The Gisleham Parish Council has raised concerns over the access, siting, and size of the proposal.
- 1.3 The Waveney Local Plan does not contain policies relating directly to rural activities in the countryside, with only policy WLP8.13 providing guidance on where employment uses would be permitted referring to uses B1, B2 and B8. Due to the lack of a standalone policy for agricultural or forestry development, and in the absence of exceptions to WLP1.2 (that seeks to restrict development outside of the settlement boundaries in the countryside) the proposed development is considered to be contrary to the local development plan. Based on the scheme of delegation, and because of these policy limitations, it is considered by

officers that the proposed development represents a departure from the Local Plan that would need to be determined by the planning committee.

- 1.4 While the local plan does not set out policies or exceptions of where development relating to rural activities would be supported, the National Planning Policy Framework does promote and support such development where this meets rural needs and is sensitive to the surroundings, as such based on the nature of the usage of the proposed development in relation to the named woodland the recommendation by planning officers is to approve the proposed development.
- 1.5 It should be noted that this scheme is similar to the refused planning application DC/16/5409/FUL for the construction of an agricultural storage building (the building proposed was in the same in scale, siting and form). This was refused based on the impact on the landscape and a lack of justification presented with the application submission. There was a similar concern over the justification originally submitted with the current application but, through the further submissions and details received by the LPA, there is considered to be sufficient justification for such a building located on the site and all previous refusal reasons have been overcome to enable the proposal to be recommended favourably.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The application site is located in the countryside, there is a dwelling to the North of the site (where the applicant resides at Country Cottage, Black Street), with established hedgerow by the highway, the opposite side of the road to the West and South is an AONB with good tree and hedge cover on both sides of the lane. The extent of the land at Country Cottage is 0.404 hectares (ha); the dense woodland at Home Covert in Henstead is 2.43ha, which is around 1.5 miles to the Southwest of the proposed siting of the building. The landholding is limited to the woodland area only, as shown on the site plans and Ariel for Home Covert, with designated assets to the West in the form of the Grade I listed St Mary Church and war memorial (II) and Henstead Hall and Hall Cottage Grade II, designated assets to the South of the woodland site. The woodland is contained by roads on three sides.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal is for the construction of a building for the storage of wood and equipment in association with the management of woodland at Home Covert.
- 3.2 This description was amended and confirmed by the agent on the 20th October to better reflect the purpose of the building and refer to the specific woodland site at Home Covert at Henstead that the building would be linked to, as the woodland is detached from the site where the proposed building is to be located. Further clarification and details were also received setting out the nature of the business, operations and specific needs and vehicular movements to provide further justification for the building. The applicant has summarised this as follows:

“The movement and storage of timber is cyclical. The process is cutting, logging, storing for drying [both long term and short term] and storage for dispatch. Usually in three cycles, the final cycle split into two. Cycle 1 - wet 30% stock, Cycle 2 semi dried [moisture content down by one third] 30% stock, Cycle 3 dry 15% stock and dry enough for dispatch 25%. The timber is stored in 650 Kg netted, specially vented bag bales, these measure 1m x 1m.”

There is a need to have mobile moving and lifting operations in front of the storage taking up a ground footprint of approximately 5.5m. The building has been worked out to accommodate the storage cycle of 100 bags. Whilst limiting the process and making the operation more difficult the building could be reduced by half a meter to 4.5m in height if that would assist to gain the consent required. This would mean the storage, which is currently three bales high may have to spread in plan, as lifting space would be limited at the eaves.

The traffic movement would be reduced as the application site is adjacent to the business owner's home, Country Cottage. Country Cottage is closer to Home Covert than the current rented storage facility. Therefore journey time would be reduced. The logging and bagging has to be done at the point of storage. This would be adjacent to Country Cottage, the home of the applicant. This means the logging, bagging and storage movements can be done at any time without the need to travel. This is not only economic but cuts out travelling time. Tree felling is a seasonal activity mainly over the December to January period each year unless there are dangerous trees to attend to i.e. Ash die back or storm damage. This is at the quietest traffic time of the year. Attendance to these matters will be from Country Cottage which is much closer to the applicant's place of residence than the former storage facility where the equipment for this type of work is retained. Deliveries of dried logs to the market will be from adjacent to the applicants home therefore there will be no travel time from his home to the store. The logs can be loaded for delivery without any transport movement."

3.3 On the 17th August 2020 details and evidence was submitted to the LPA including setting out the extent of land ownership, and confirming ownership since 1985. The correspondence also sets out the reasoning for the proposed development to provide storage for 100 bags of logs for revolving winter disposal (and associated equipment and movements), the building will suit the needs of the business, and the location closer to the woods and by the applicant's home will reduce the environmental impact with shorter vehicular movements between the sites.

4. Consultations/comments

4.1 No third-party representations received.

5. Consultees

Parish/Town Council

Consultee_consulted	Date reply received	
Gisleham Parish Council	17 July 2020	5 August 2020
Summary of comments: Members have viewed the documents submitted and consider the size of the building, and its proximity to the road, is inappropriate to the size of the plot and its relationship with adjoining dwellings. Members were also concerned about the position of the access and visibility for large vehicles entering and leaving the site, taking into account the proximity of the sharp bend on Black Street		

Statutory consultees

Consultee_consulted	Date reply received	
Suffolk County - Highways Department	17 July 2020	13 August 2020
Summary of comments: Notice is hereby given that the County Council as Highway Authority make the following comments: The current proposal would not generate additional vehicle movements onto the highway network at this location. Therefore, SCC does not wish to raise an objection to DC/202440/FUL		

Non statutory consultees

Consultee_consulted	Date reply received	
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	17 July 2020	No response
Summary of comments: No response received; consultation period has expired		

Consultee_consulted	Date reply received	
Environmental Protection (Internal)	17 July 2020	22 July 2020
Summary of comments: Thank you for consulting me on the above application but I have no concerns or adverse comments to make.		

Publicity

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Departure	6 th November 2020	27 th November 2020	Beccles and Bungay Journal Lowestoft Journal

6. Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework

WLP1.2 - Settlement Boundaries (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019))

WLP8.21 – Sustainable Transport (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019))

WLP8.13 - New Employment Development (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019))

WLP8.29 - Design (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019))

WLP8.35 - Landscape Character (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019))

7. Planning considerations

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that *“where in making any determination under the planning Acts, if regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”*.
- 7.2 This is a somewhat unconventional arrangement for such a building to be erected on a detached site, but based on further details that have been received on the context of the woodland site at Home Covert, this is considered to be a more suitable location. The woodland area is dense and a sensitive landscape, and there is a lack of space available on that site to accommodate such a building in a manner that would be acceptable in terms of landscape and heritage impact. Siting the building at Black Street would not be as visually intrusive based on the current screening that can be further enhanced to protect the wider landscape.
- 7.3 As noted, there are not specific policies in the development plan relating to such rural development, however paragraph 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework does seek to support the rural economy through sustainable development and growth of land based rural businesses including through new buildings to support such activities. Additionally paragraph 84 recognises that, to meet local needs, such development may have to be located outside of existing settlements, for which such development should be sensitive to the character of the wider landscape and not result in an unacceptable impact on the local highway network.
- 7.4 The supporting documentation sets out that the siting of the proposed building is located closer to the woodland than the existing rented premises. The proposed development relating to a rural land based activity would realistically be expected to be located in the countryside, rather than in a designated village or employment area. The closer proximity to the woodland, and the applicants being able to live to the North, adjacent to the site, would reduce vehicular movements and duration of trips. As such the proposed development would not significantly impact the traffic flow in the vicinity, for which the vehicular activity would be somewhat limited, in any case, given the felling season mainly being in the months of December and January. The County Council Highways Officer has raised no objection and does not consider the proposal to result in a significant intensification of vehicular usage. The proposed development is acceptable, in highways safety terms, in accordance with policy WLP8.21.
- 7.5 The building will have a footprint of 9m by 18m, with an eave height of 4.572m. The building will be a steel portal framed building clad in Eternit profile 6 natural grey fibre cement sheeting, with translucent roof light sheeting within the profile of the roof to be incorporated. Given the rural location, such a building will not appear an incongruous feature in the landscape. The design and profile are of a utilitarian agricultural style unit with roller steel shutter, given the rural setting and conventional profile and form of such a

building, this is considered to be visually acceptable. The size of the building is justified for the purpose of storage and associated operations; as such the design is considered in accordance with local design policy WLP8.29. The nearest neighbouring property to the North is in the ownership of the applicants, with other properties beyond not likely to be materially impacted by the development proposal. The environmental health team raise no objections to the scheme.

- 7.6 The impact on the AONB across the road is partly mitigated with existing hedging and tree cover along Black Street, the building will also be in a setdown position with the levelling of the land to accommodate the proposed development that will help keep the profile down. The Council's Arboriculture and Landscape Officer has no significant concerns over the impact of the proposed development subject to a recommendation to seek further mitigation by condition to provide a native shrub-based planting scheme around the two field aspects of the site. With this condition attached to a grant of planning permission, the proposal accords with the landscape objectives of policy WLP8.35.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The NPPF advocates supporting rural based land activities through sustainable growth and new buildings. The proposed development would help support such a rural land based activity where such development needs to be located outside of the village boundaries. The applicant has provided evidence of the land ownership related to the woodland site and has set out sufficient justification for the scale of the building. The design is of a conventional form and profile for a rural activity, the impact of which can be mitigated and softened on the wider landscape through enhanced hedgerow planting. Whilst the principle of development is not specifically supported by the spatial strategy and policies of the Local Plan, officers consider that the need for the development has been demonstrated, and that such development is supported by the NPPF as a rural land based activity. There are no significant adverse impacts arising and the proposed development accords with the detailed policy requirements in terms of specific matters such landscape impact, design, amenity, and highways safety. Thus, for the reasons given, officers consider that there are material considerations that would indicate a decision be made contrary to the adopted Local Plan. The application is recommended for approval.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Authority to Approve, subject to no additional material planning objections being received prior to 28 November 2020 (the date of expiry of the press advert); and subject to the following conditions:

10. Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within a period of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be completed in all respects strictly in accordance with the plans and supporting documentation received 2nd July 2020, 17th August 2020 and 20th October 2020.

Approved drawings

Block plan S 1754

Proposed floor plans and elevations and site location plan S 1754 01

Site plan of Home Covert S 1754 10

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

3. The two field aspects of the site shall be planted with a triple row of native shrub based hedgerows within 12 months of the commencement of the development or such other period as shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Planting shall take place in the autumn planting season to a planting and maintenance specification that shall be agreed in advance in writing with the Local Planning Authority, and any plants which die during the first 3 years shall be replaced in the next planting season.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and the appearance of the locality.

4. The building shall be used for the storage of wood and equipment associated with the woodland at Home Covert (drawing no S 1754 10) and for no other purpose, unless otherwise approved by the local planning authority through the grant of planning permission.

Reasons: In order that the local planning authority may retain control over this development/site in the interests of amenity and the protection of the local environment.

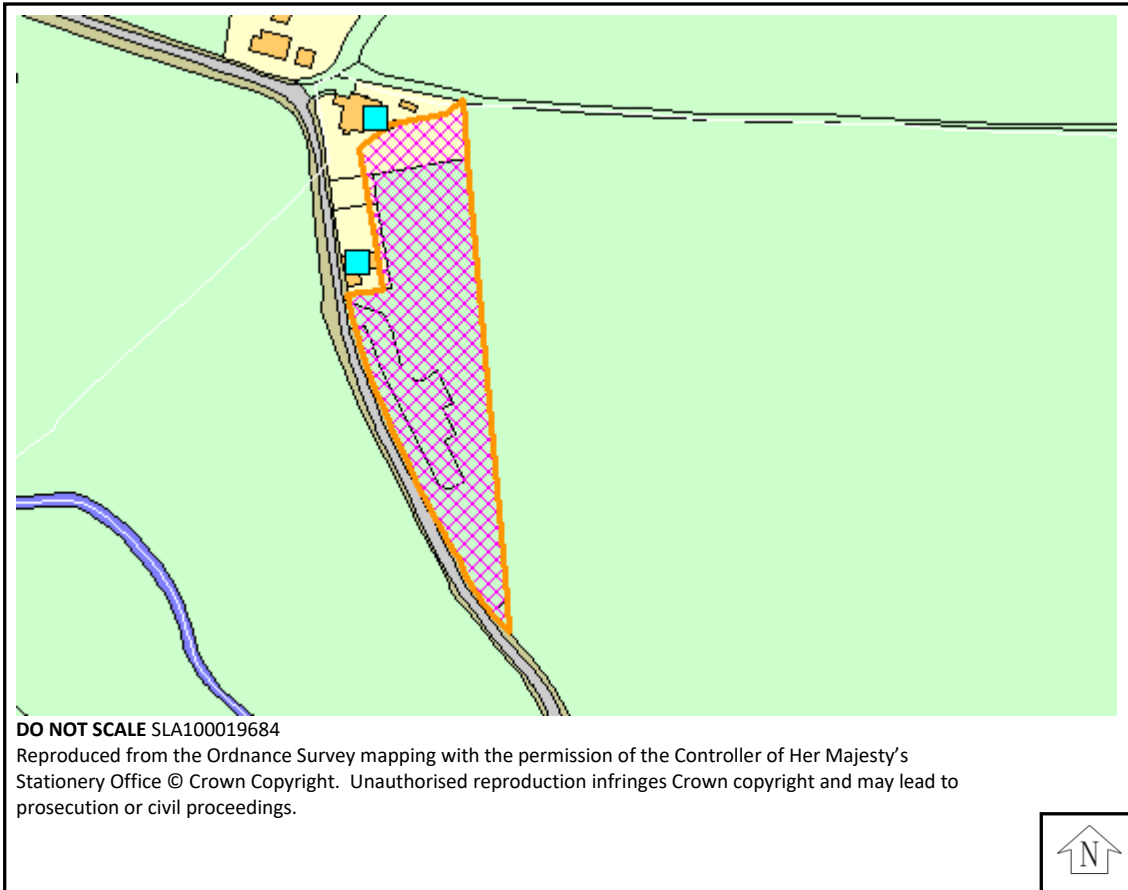
Informatives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has assessed the proposal against all material considerations including planning policies and any comments that may have been received. The planning application has been approved in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and local plan to promote the delivery of sustainable development and to approach decision taking in a positive way.





Background Papers

See application reference DC/20/2440/FUL on [Public Access](#)

Map



Key

-  Notified, no comments received
-  Objection
-  Representation
-  Support