

TAUNTON DEANE NURSERIES

ERECTION OF 3 NO. POLYTUNNELS AND CLARIFICATION OF VEHICULAR MOVEMENTS AT TAUNTON DEANE NURSERY, STOKE ROAD, STOKE ST MARY (RETENTION OF WORKS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN)

Grid Reference: 324573.122808

Retention of Building/Works etc.

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Permission be GRANTED

Recommended Decision: Approval for the following reason:

The proposed polytunnels are considered not to have a detrimental impact upon visual or residential amenity and is therefore considered acceptable and, accordingly, does not conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 (General Requirements) and S2 (Design).

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

Notes for compliance

1. Vegetation has grown throughout the summer months and now affects the visibility splay to the left when exiting the site (Stoke St Mary direction). Visibility splays should be maintained at all times, and it is recommended that this vegetation is removed.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to retain on site 3 polytunnels as well as clarification of the vehicular movements to the site of the existing Taunton Deane nursery site at Stoke Road. The application is made following a response from the Ombudsman to a complaint. The polytunnels are of slightly different sizes, 5.1m x10.7m, 5m x 15.3m and 5.8m x 11.9m. 2 are used by Somerset College for teaching purposes which was envisioned as ancillary to the horticultural use as part of the original permission for the structures on site. The vehicle movement statement clarifies the current situation, although there are no planning restrictions over vehicle movements from the site.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site consists of former agricultural land which had use as a commercial plant nursery for the Authority in October 2006 (ref.37/06/0006). Subsequent applications were submitted for the alteration of the access position (37/06/0010) and erection of greenhouses, polytunnels and an office building in July 2007(37/07/0002).

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - I refer to the above-mentioned planning application received on 20th June 2011 and following an inspection of the application and a site visit on the same day, I do not propose to make any highway observations unless specifically requested to do so. If, however, you have concerns regarding sustainable transport issues and/or the access (and on-site arrangements) and whether they are adequate for the purpose proposed in order to secure the safety of the occupier and to avoid nuisance and danger to others, please contact me so that I can give observations on this proposal.

I refer to your recent request for highway comments on this application, following my previous response. I can confirm I have not visited site since my last visit on 20th June 2011 and can confirm my observations following this site visit.

The proposal seeks to retain three poly-tunnels. The use of poly-tunnels on a horticultural site is considered ancillary to the overall use, and unlikely to generate additional traffic in its own right.

The existing access to the site has been provided to a suitable standard and also should provide good visibility in both directions. However, it was noted during the site visit that a small amount of vegetation has encroached into the visibility splay to the left when exiting the site (in the Stoke St Mary direction).

On the basis that the proposal seeks retention of an existing facility, and due to its ancillary use, it may be unreasonable for the highway authority to refuse this application.

If the Planning Authority is minded to approve this application, then a note should be provided to the Applicant: Vegetation has grown throughout the summer months and now affects the visibility splay to the left when exiting the site (Stoke St Mary direction). Visibility splays should be maintained at all times, and it is recommended that this vegetation is removed.

STOKE ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL - Objections raised and supported by photographic evidence from Mr Groves had been raised to PC by neighbouring residents. These objections include frequent use of site at unsocial hours, increased vehicular activity, traffic noise, dust, general environmental impact and nuisance and loss of amenity.

Currently there appears to be much increased traffic movements, unsuited to either the narrow lanes through Stoke St Mary or through Chestnut Drive - a densely populated residential estate. The further proposed expansion of the site would substantially increase traffic to and from the site.

The application would appear to be retrospective as the site is currently being used as a depot for non horticultural storage and tipping for forward transit. This is above and beyond the scope of the original application. We believe the site to be currently operating without the appropriate permissions being in place and therefore open to enforcement proceedings.

No environmental survey regarding the impact on flora and fauna has been offered, nor does the site appear to have been registered as an approved recycling depot (deposit of tarmacadam hard core). Taking into account the above it was unanimously agreed to oppose both applications.

LANDSCAPE - Subject to reinforcement of the southern boundary landscape the proposals are acceptable.

Representations

1 letter on behalf of neighbour objecting to an unrestricted consent for the polytunnels, the use of two polytunnels for educational purposes, the increase in traffic this entails, additional traffic movements at weekends and increased disturbance. There would be no objection if conditions were imposed to restrict the hours of use, prevention of other uses such as a depot or waste transfer station and limits to sales and visits by the public. The following conditions are suggested:

- No plant or machinery shall be operated, no process shall be carried out and no deliveries shall be taken at or dispatched from the site outside of the following times, namely 07.00hours to 17.00hours on weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays, Bank or public holidays the site shall only be accessed between the hours of 10 and 16.00 and solely for the purposes of watering plants.
- The site shall be used only as a horticultural plant nursery and in particular shall not be used for: retail sales; or educational purposes; or any storage purposes not associated directly with the nursery use of the site; or a depot; or a waste transfer station.
- There shall be no open storage of sand, gravel or compost within the site.

2 objections on basis of noise, disruption, harm to former greenfield site, dust and vehicular movements in the early morning or late at night should not be authorised.

PLANNING POLICIES

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development,
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas,
STR6 - Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages,
S&ENPP19 - S&ENP - Employment and Community Provision in Rural Areas,
S&ENPP48 - S&ENP - Access and Parking,
S&ENPP49 - S&ENP - Transport Requirements of New Development,
S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,
S7 - TDBCLP - Outside Settlement,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations are the impact of the development on the character and amenity of the surrounding area.

The area of new polytunnels are approximately 200sqm which equates to around 5% of the permitted site area cover of glass houses and polytunnels. The polytunnels that are subject to this application are sited in front of the existing polytunnels and

are reasonably well screened from public vantage points by the existing boundary screening. If viewed they are seen in conjunction with the existing structures on the site and there is not considered to be any adverse landscape or amenity impact from the polytunnels as erected. Concerns raised by the neighbouring objector include noise, disturbance and unsocial hours. However these concerns would appear to relate to the existing horticultural use of the site as well as the specific educational use of the polytunnels the subject of this application. The educational use of the site by Somerset College was referred to in the design and access statement submitted with the application for the original buildings on the site. The use is minor in relation to the overall horticultural use and is considered to be ancillary. It is not considered appropriate or reasonable to impose controls over the polytunnels applied for.

The level of traffic movements to serve the educational use of the site by Somerset College is considered minimal in relation to the general use of the site. The college visit twice a week in term time and up to three times a week in school holidays to carry out watering and maintenance. There were no objections from the Highway Authority to the original use of the site, there are no controls over traffic visiting the site or hours of use and the Highway Authority raise no objection to the current application.

The existing horticultural use of the site covers the area as a whole including external storage of materials for the horticulture use as well as growing areas in the polytunnels and greenhouses. The storage bays of concern to the objector are used for the horticultural use of the site and as such there were no controls imposed on the original permission on their use. Similarly the Council service the various roundabouts, hanging baskets etc around the town with horticultural goods from the site in the same way as was carried out from the Mount Street site. The applicant advises the site is not a waste transfer station and it would not be possible to run the business from the site if the suggested objector's conditions were imposed.

A wildlife survey was submitted with the original application and no protected species found. Given the relative area of land that is proposed and the nature of the application it is not considered that there would be any adverse wildlife impact from the proposal.

In light of the above considerations the current proposal is not considered to adversely affect the amenity of neighbours, wildlife or character of the area and is considered acceptable.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.

CONTACT OFFICER: Mr G Clifford Tel: 01823 356398