

43/2004/038

WADHAM FENCING & LANDSCAPING

EXPANSION OF BUSINESS ONTO LAND TO BE USED FOR COVERED AND OPEN STORAGE OF RAW MATERIALS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS TOGETHER WITH ACCESS AND LANDSCAPING, LAND ADJOINING UNIT 2, RYLANDS FARM INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BAGLEY ROAD, WELLINGTON.

12503/19501

OUTLINE APPLICATION

PROPOSAL

The application site adjoins part of the premises currently occupied by the applicants. The proposal is for the expansion of the existing business onto land to be used for open storage of raw materials (concrete fencing posts, raw timber) and covered storage of finished products (fencing panels) together with access and landscaping. The processes would remain in the existing adjoining unit, which is used as a sawing and assembly workshop. The size of the proposed building is 600 sq m. Part of the site is occupied by polytunnels in nursery use with hardstanding areas and the remainder is grazing land. The site comprises 0.23 ha of land and is bounded by Rylands Farmhouse and Rylands Nurseries to the north, Rylands Nurseries to the east, the existing Rylands Farm Industrial Estate to the south and the remainder of the paddock area to the west beyond which is Bagley Road. The company currently employs 15 staff and they anticipate that a further 5 staff would be employed if the proposal proceeds.

Wadham Fencing was established at Cheddon Fitzpaine in 1985 and moved to Rylands Farm Industrial estate 10 years ago, taking a 100 sq m building and a 500 sq m yard. The company has since expanded and taken up the unit adjoining the current application site, taking a further 135 sq m of covered floorspace. Since relocating, the workforce has increased from 6 to 15 full time employees. Three of these cycle to work, two walk and the daily vehicle movement is one lorry and 20 light vehicles per day (including the workforce). The applicants have installed specialist sawing and joinery equipment. The yard area is used for raw material storage and tanalising tanks. Additional storage, both covered and open, is required, particularly adjacent to the assembly building. Three forklift trucks are used for moving raw materials and finished products to and from the sawing and assembly buildings, and the applicants consider that it is now essential to expand the premises to sustain and expand the business further. If the proposed expansion takes place, the workforce is likely to increase to at least 20 with some additional traffic movement. Daily traffic movements would probably increase to one lorry movement and 24 light vehicle movements per day. The applicants consider that the increase in traffic movement is not commensurate with the increase in employees, as it is anticipated that staff living within close proximity of the works will be employed.

The proposal provides for a storage building to be erected close by the sawmill, with a level concrete service area to enable forklift trucks and other vehicles to safely carry materials to and from the works. The application is in outline, although an illustrative plan shows a building (46 m x 12.5 m height 6.3 m) on the site of the existing

polytunnels. The remainder would be used for an uncovered storage area for raw materials and landscaping.

The company indicates that it is committed to maintaining and providing additional employment opportunities in Wellington. To be able to continue this trend, the company sees that it is essential to expand. In order to expand, the applicant has considered several options, viz:- i) a split site operation (acquiring use of another unit at the southern end of Rylands Industrial Estate) - the applicants consider that this would be operationally dangerous carrying materials any distance by forklift along the estate roads and past other units and the additional handling and operating costs would render this a non-viable alternative; ii) to relocate the whole business onto the southern end of the Rylands farm Industrial Estate - the applicants consider that it would not be economically viable due to closure of the business during the dismantling and relocation of the specialist equipment used (including not only the sawing and joinery equipment, but also the pit extractor fans, filters, etc). They consider that this would have a knock on effect to the trading as, once interrupted, sales and orders would be lost. The cost of dismantling and refitting the equipment is estimated at approximately £25,000. The applicants consider that the rental on a new build would increase the company's current rent liability by approximately 50% over and above the existing rent paid, and although the business may be able to absorb a higher rent on one new building, they consider that it could not sustain an increase of this magnitude over the whole of its working and operational site; iii) continue to use current buildings and expand onto adjoining land (the current proposal). The company's production does not require new build premises, but can operate effectively, efficiently and economically from the current buildings it occupies, with the addition of basic covered and open storage and unloading areas as proposed. The proposed site is operationally ideal and its development would not cause any disruption to the existing business or order book; and iv) total relocation to another site - if a total relocation was to be contemplated, it would have to be to low cost premises, possibly Bridgwater. The applicants consider that option iii), involving expansion onto the adjoining land, is the only workable solution and that this would be compliant with policy EC1a of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit. The applicants consider that the economic benefits, both in terms of employment and to the vitality of the company, clearly outweigh the need to retain this plot as 'open countryside'. Furthermore, the applicants consider that mitigating measures can be achieved within the development site, such as the banking and planting proposed. They consider that the site is already within the physical curtilage of the industrial estate, albeit not formally zoned as such. The applicant's agent considers that if the proposal were to be rejected, the company's expansion would be being held back for no sustainably good reason.

A previous planning application in 2003 was withdrawn prior to determination (see Committee agenda 21/5/03). The current application is on approximately 50% of the site area previously put forward and is seen by the applicants as the minimum amount of land necessary for the proposal and associated landscaping. A 10 m wide strip of shrub and tree planting suggested by the Landscape Officer on the previous application is now proposed as part of the current application. The proposed store is only likely to be used by forklifts during working hours, so the applicants would find any suggested noise restrictions acceptable. A sustainable urban drainage system, previously suggested by the Drainage Officer, is currently being designed.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY views awaited.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the proposed storage building will extend the industrial character of the area further north closer to the adjoining farm building. However subject to successful establishment of the 10 m wide mound planting, as proposed, and a native hedgerow with tree planting along the post and rail fence line it should be possible in time to reduce the impact and maintain the character of the smaller paddock area. Although not within the application area, a hedgerow and tree planting on a 1 m high bank along the northern side of the main access road would significantly reduce the impact of the proposed storage building from Bagley Road. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER support (further views will be reported verbally).

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER noise emissions should not exceed background levels by more than 5 decibels when measured at any point at the facade of any residential or other noise sensitive boundary Monday - Friday 0800 hours to 1800 hours and Saturday 0800 hours to 1300 hours; at all other times including public holidays, noise emissions shall not be audible when so measured; noise emissions having tonal characteristics shall not exceed background levels at any time. DRAINAGE OFFICER have agreed sizes for the soakaways to deal with surface water run off from the proposal together with a french drain.

TOWN COUNCIL will be reported verbally.

SIX LETTERS OF OBJECTION land previously classed for agricultural use and not for industry; if allowed there should be an hours of work condition restricting to 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays to Saturdays and no work on Sundays and bank holidays; loss of views; increased traffic noise and pollution; land should remain as a buffer/sound barrier between the residential area and the industrial estate; area is Greenfield; there is sufficient land elsewhere on the estate that already has planning consent; applicant is a tenant and therefore always under threat of future relocation/expense; a tarmac hardstanding has already been put down together with huge quantities of construction spoil; previous permission to the applicant elsewhere on the estate which was not taken up; the portacabin and polytunnels have crept onto the site without planning permission; drainage wrongly installed; existing drains on Bagley Road cannot cope with further run off; nothing has changed since the previous recommendation of refusal; applicant's alternative options and reasons not good enough to expand onto land outside development limits; horrendous intrusion on adjacent residential property; precedent for development on the remaining agricultural land; part of the site has been sadly neglected and is now giving an impression of dereliction; policy EC1a is not relevant; question who is most likely to benefit from converting low cost agricultural land into high cost industrial land; proposed landscaping inadequate; there may be the temptation to move the machinery into the proposed storage building.

POLICY CONTEXT

PPG1 indicates that planning proposals should be considered against the provisions of the development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review provides various criteria for sustainable development. Policy STR6 goes on to say that development outside towns, rural centres and villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel.

Policy WD/SP/2 of the West Deane Local Plan states that outside defined settlement limits, development will not be permitted unless it is for the purposes of agriculture or forestry or accords with a specific development plan policy or proposal. Policy WD/IE/1 provides criteria against which employment proposals will be assessed. Policy WD/IE/2 goes on to say that the Borough Council will not normally permit the construction of new buildings for industry, warehousing or office use outside the defined settlement limits, although where there is no suitable site within the village, small scale employment developments will be permitted outside but adjacent to the village limits, where the criteria in policy WD/IE/1 are satisfied.

Policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit covers general strategy requirements of development proposals. Policy S8 of the same plan states that outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape character of the area and meets certain criteria. One of these criteria is that the proposal should support the vitality and viability of the rural economy in a way which cannot be sited within the defined limits of a settlement. Policy EC1a states that proposals by existing firms to expand onto land subject to restrictive policies will be permitted where relocation to a more suitable site is unrealistic and the economic benefit of the proposal outweighs any harm to the objectives of the relevant policy. Policy EC4 goes on to say that outside the defined limits of settlements, the development of new small scale buildings for business, industrial and warehousing use will be permitted provided certain criteria are met. One of these is that the site is adjacent to the limits of a village within which there is no suitable site available

ASSESSMENT

The applicant contends that the fencing business is very seasonal and stock has to be built up to meet demand through the sales period. The land is not subject to restrictive covenants. Loss of views and loss of value of property are not planning considerations. Applicant's agent contends that there have been no noise complaints with regard to the industrial estate since 2000. Agent also contends that the natural surface water drainage would be to the Nowers stream and not towards Bagley Road and that the land is not viable for use as agricultural land.

The site is located outside the settlement limits, beyond the existing Rylands Farm Industrial Estate, and is therefore within the open countryside in planning policy terms.

However the proposal provides for the limited expansion of an existing company within the existing industrial estate which will result in additional jobs. I consider that the release of this greenfield site is acceptable in that it only proposes development on the part of the paddock away from the road and allowing for landscaping. The Borough Council has approved an Interim Employment Land Policy as Supplementary Guidance which provided for extensions to existing industrial estates in appropriate circumstances. Although there is other allocated land with planning permission adjacent to the estate, the current proposal constitutes a relatively minor incursion onto the area beyond the limits of the estate, and is therefore considered to be acceptable. The proposal is also considered to satisfy the requirements of Policy EC1a, despite the proximity of the nearby industrial allocation. The needs of the existing firm and the costs of relocation are considered to outweigh the normal presumption in favour of development taking place on the allocated land. In view of the recommended noise limit condition and restriction to storage use only, it is not considered that an hours of work restriction is appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the views of the County Highway Authority, the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, details, materials, landscaping, limit to storage only and noise emissions. Notes re disabled access, energy/water conservation and soakaways.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- It is considered that the proposal is in line with Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policies S1, EC1a and EC5 and that it will assist an existing business within the industrial estate to expand with no significant harm to residential or visual amenities in the area.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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NOTES: