Planning Committee: 10 November 2010 **Item Number:**

Application No: W 10 / 1134

Registration Date: 27/08/10

Town/Parish Council: Offchurch **Expiry Date:** 22/10/10

Case Officer: Sandip Sahota
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Land Fronting Welsh Road, Offchurch, Leamington Spa

Positioning of 2no. storage containers on land to store implements for field maintenance; Formation of driveway and hardstanding between and in front of the containers (retrospective application). FOR Mr D Blackwell

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This application is being presented to Committee in order to request that enforcement action be taken.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Eathorpe, Hunningham, Offchurch and Wappenbury Joint Parish Council: No objection.

WCC Ecology: "I would recommend that a note relating to bats and nesting birds, as protected species, is attached to any approval granted. Also, please note that we have amphibian and reptile records nearby. I would therefore recommend that a note relating to reptiles and amphibians, as protected species, is attached to any approval granted".

WCC Highways: "No objection, subject to the following condition: Improvement to the visibility spay from the vehicular access to achieve an 'x' distance of 2.4 metres from the edge of the carriageway, extending through the limits of the site frontage onto the public highway. The vegetation to be cut back and maintained to ensure that maximum visibility is available at all times".

District Council's Rural Planning Consultant:- [Rhodes Rural Planning & Land Management]: "It is my opinion that the applicant's proposal to retain the containers, the hardstanding and the driveway is reasonable given that he has taken a decision to utilise the field for grazing and to derive income from this activity. The equipment stored in the containers and in the open will be used to cultivate and manage the field. The driveway and hardstanding will allow ease of access to the equipment and to the stabling if approved."

RELEVANT POLICIES

- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines SPG
- Planning Policy Guidance 2 : Green Belts

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning permission (ref: W09/0264) for 'Erection of portal framed building to store agricultural machinery and implements' was refused in 2009 for the following reason:

"The site is a 1.6 hectare piece of agricultural land laid down to grass situated within the Green Belt. Policy DAP1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 states that there will be a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

There is no evidence of any current agricultural operation on the landholding, nor has any information been submitted to the District Planning Authority to indicate if a farming system is to be undertaken in the future or what stock will be held on the land. There is consequently a lack of clarity as to the intended agricultural usage of the building in relation to the land both now and in the future. In the opinion of the District Planning Authority the proposed building is large for the size of the landholding and a clear agricultural case is required to justify a building of this size within the Green Belt, which would detract from character, appearance and openness of this rural location.

Given the relatively small scale of the landholding, the absence of any agricultural activity on the land and the lack of an agricultural appraisal/ justification for the proposed building and information as to the proposed agricultural usage of the building in relation to the land, the District Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposed building is reasonably required for agriculture and this proposal is therefore considered to be inappropriate development, which by definition is harmful. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the provisions of the aforementioned policy".

Planning permission (ref: W09/1196) for 'Erection of 8m steel portal framed building to store farm machinery and implements was refused on 24 November 2009 for the following reason:

"The site is a 1.6 hectare piece of agricultural land laid down to grass situated within the Green Belt. Policy DAP1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 states that there will be a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

No stock is kept on the land and no crop of hay or silage is taken off it. The land is periodically mown and topped to prevent it becoming overgrown. The land is not currently being used for agricultural purposes nor is an agricultural business being pursued by the applicant.

The use for the proposed building is for the storage of tractors and equipment which is not utilised for agricultural purposes. The District Planning Authority is therefore not satisfied that the proposed building is reasonably required for agriculture and the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development which, by definition, is harmful. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the provisions of the aforementioned policy".

A planning application (ref: W10/1133) for 'erection of stable block after demolition of existing shed' has been submitted to the District Planning Authority, but has yet to be determined. This proposed stable block is to comprise of 4no. standard 3.66 square metre stables in a timber shiplap construction.

KEY ISSUES

The Site and its Location

The application relates to a 1.6 hectare (3.95 acre) open field laid down to grass not currently used for agricultural purposes situated on the north side of Welsh Road, Offchurch and is washed over by Green Belt. There is a small building constructed from timber/ corrugated steel sheeting situated close to the northwest corner of the field, which is unsuitable for secure storage due to its dilapidated state.

Details of the Development

On 1 March 2010 the applicant installed two lockable steel containers on this landholding close to the existing field access. In addition, an area of hardstanding was created in front of the containers and from the field access point to the existing wooden building.

The two containers installed on site are dark green containers situated 8 metres apart adjacent to the north west boundary of the site close to the field access close to the road junction. The containers are of a standard size of 6.1 metres (l) x 2.5 metres (w) x 2.6 metres (h). A timber fence has been erected between the two containers as permitted development.

The new driveway is approximately 54 metres in length and approximately 3 metres wide and has been constructed of 300mm deep hardcore. A hardstanding has also been installed between the two containers, some 8 m by 10 m.

The applicant has advised that he was concerned about thefts from his property and that he had installed the storage containers on his land for security purposes so that he could store two tractors and a topper.

The applicant has stated that his intention is to let the stabling to local horse owners on a DIY livery basis so that the land is gainfully used. The equipment which the applicant is currently storing in the containers or out in the open would be used to manage the land for grazing and for the general upkeep of fences, hedges, etc.

Assessment

The main considerations in the determination of this application are:

1. Whether the development accords with National Green Belt policy contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts and the impact of the proposal on the openness and rural character of the Green Belt.
2. Highway Safety.

Green Belt:

It is my opinion that the principle of some form of storage facility on site for agricultural equipment and machinery is reasonable, given that the field is to be utilised for grazing, the equipment will be used to manage and cultivate the field and the driveway will allow ease of access to the existing building and to the proposed stabling, the subject of application W10/1333.

However, it is my view that the siting and design of the storage facilities and associated hardstanding is unacceptable in this Green Belt location. The Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines specify that new agricultural buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped to blend with the surrounding farmed landscape. The storage containers are situated in a conspicuous location close to the existing field access gate and are clearly visible from the public highway. The units have the industrial and utilitarian appearance of standard shipping containers and stand out as incongruous features in this rural location and together with the associated hardstanding detract from the rural character of the area.

Highway Safety:

I note the comments raised by the Highways Authority and the recommended condition could be added to any approval granted.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE, for the refusal reasons listed below and authorise enforcement action to secure the removal of the storage containers and associated hardstanding within 2 months.

REFUSAL REASONS

1 The site is situated within the Green Belt and Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 states that within the Green Belt, the rural character of the area will be retained and protected. The District Planning Authority also have adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled The Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines, Dunsmore, which states that new agricultural buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped to blend with the surrounding farmed landscape. Policy DP1 in the Warwick District Local Plan requires new development to relate well to local topography and landscape features whilst Policy DP3 requires new development to protect and enhance the landscape character of the area.

In the opinion of the District Planning Authority the storage containers represent prominent and incongruous features that extend the built development of the site onto an area where there have previously been no buildings.

The containers and associated hardstanding detract from the rural character of the area. The development is therefore contrary to the provisions of PPG2, The Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines SPG and Policies DP1 and DP3 in the Warwick District Local Plan.