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7th January 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Site: Green Farm, Norton Canon, Hereford, HR4 7BH
Description: Proposed potato storage building and associated works

Please find enclosed a prior approval application for the above development.

Site Location and Description

Green Farm is located on the east side of A480 and opposite the junction with Kittys Lane (unclassified road number 90408) in the dispersed settlement of Norton Canon. The site forms part of Yazor Court Farm which totals 1255 hectares (3100 acres).

The farm comprises a mix of steel frame and corrugated clad and roofed older agricultural buildings, red brick barns and a Dutch barn with concrete yard area between and are served by a single access off the A480.

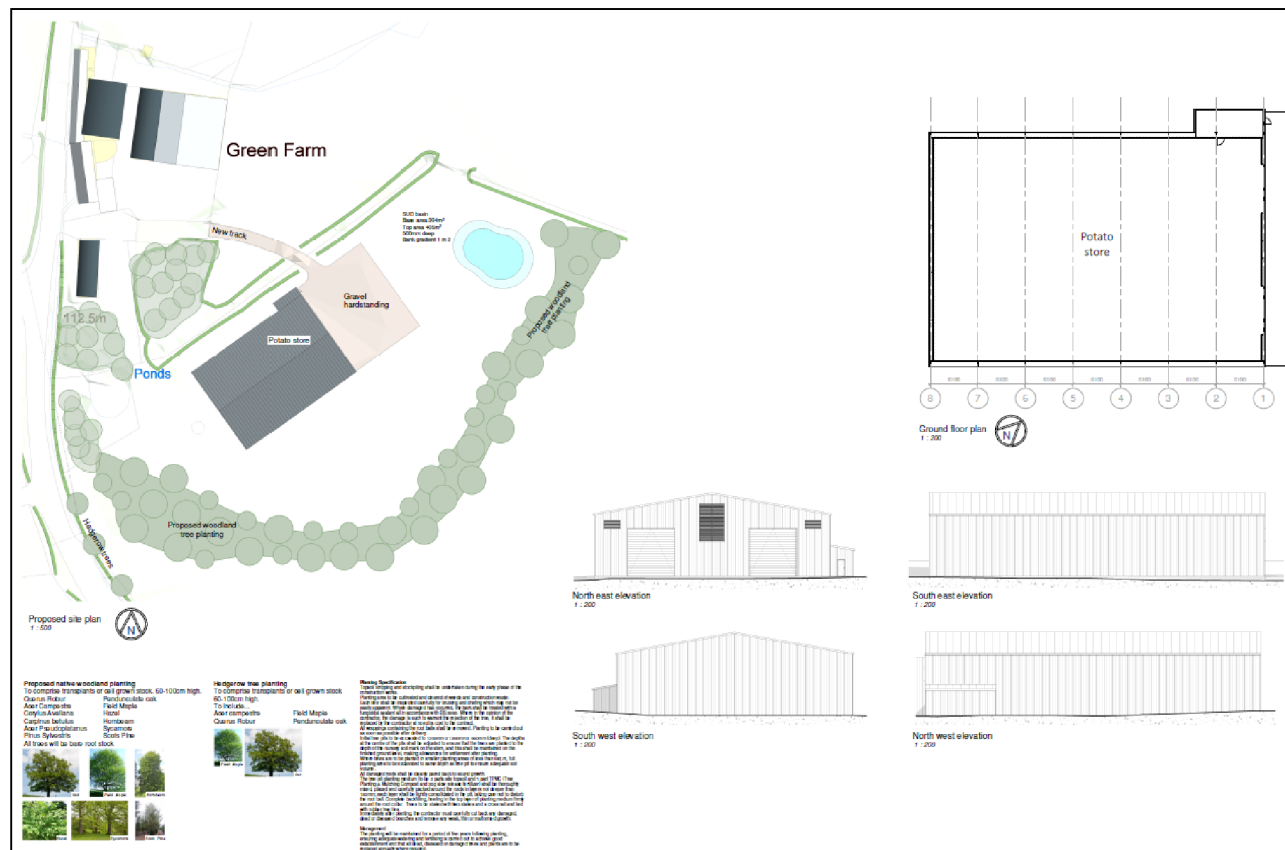
The application site is the western corner of an arable field, 40 metres southeast of the existing group of buildings and yard and is outlined in red on the plan below. The site is relatively flat and is bounded on the roadside by native hedge, and small group of trees lie immediately to the west and a ditch runs along the northern western and northern boundaries.



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The Proposal

This proposal concerns the construction of a seven bay detached building to be used for agricultural storage. More specifically, for a large proportion of the year the building will be used as a bulk potato store and when not used to store potatoes, it will be used as a grain store and/or general purpose agricultural machinery and implement store.



Agricultural Need

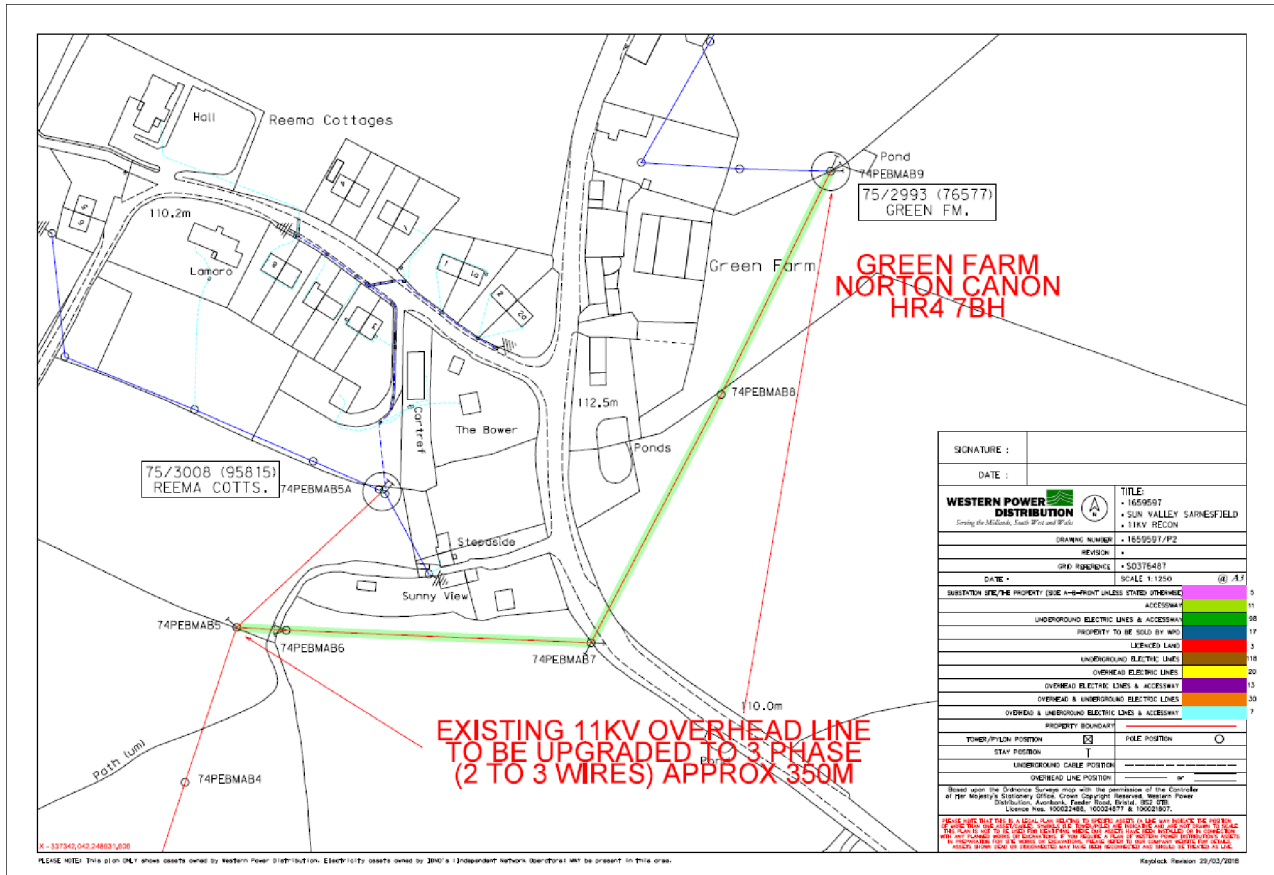
Green Farm forms part of Yazor Farm and is farmed as a single holding. In total this amounts 1255 hectares (3100 acres) split between 830 hectares of cereals, 130 hectares of potatoes, 53 hectares of cider apples, 243 hectares of environmental stewardship and 180,000 boiler chickens. As a result of a new contract with [REDACTED] awarded this summer, the area of potatoes planted will almost double (previously 72 hectares). This will produce around 5900 tonnes of potatoes next year. The farms existing potato stores are both rented and are already full of cereals and potatoes. They are also not efficient storage facilities as they were designed for other purposes (fertiliser and machinery). There is an agricultural need for an additional storage building on the holding.

The chosen site at Norton Canon is central, geographically, to the wider holding and will therefore aid in reducing transport distances and the impact of large machinery on the local highway network particularly during harvest season. It will house bulk potato storage based on a natural ventilation system. A building of this size is the most cost-effective storage system, maximising the efficiency of labour and materials and, also that of potato storage design and capability.

The potato enterprise has been expanded to a 'modular level', where efficiencies in machinery and labour are to be maximised to ensure financial sustainability. In a post-Brexit landscape, where farm support has been reduced by the UK government, producing a high value crop that can supply a UK-based supply chain is critical to the financial and social sustainability of the applicant's family farming business. The chance to build a bespoke design potato store will assist in the sustainability of the family business including the 6 local people that it employs.

Siting

The building is sited in the arable field southeast of the existing farmstead with a new track proposed to connect the two. Consideration was first given to siting the building alongside the existing buildings within a grassed area immediately to the east. However, there is a 11000 volt high voltage electric cable running through this area and cost of moving this is unviable. This is denoted on plan below.



Moreover, even if this cable were moved, there is insufficient space within this area to accommodate the size of building that is required to serve the functional needs of the agricultural business, and this location would also have a greater impact on the amenity of the nearest neighbour to the northwest. Consequently, the proposed siting is the only feasible and viable option.

Design, Scale and Appearance

The building will be of a standard steel portal frame construction clad and roofed in box profile sheet - colour dark grey. The front elevation will house two roller shutter doors and

ventilation ducts. The building is of a typical modern functional agricultural design and the use of matt dark grey external material will give the building a muted appearance.

The scale is informed by the bulk potato storage needs of the holding as explained earlier in this statement. The building is under 12 metres in height as stipulated by part A.1(g) of the GPDO. Although there are no immediate neighbours, the building entrance and associated unloading area is orientated northeast away from the nearest neighbours.

The track and hardstanding area adjacent the building entrance will be a porous gravel construction again typical of agricultural tracks across Herefordshire.

Landscape

The site is largely screened from public vantage points by a combination of mature trees and existing buildings to the west and northwest but is more exposed to the south and southwest. To address this, a significant planting belt is proposed to effectively enclose the more open setting to the building.

The planting has also been informed by the Council Landscape Character Assessment 2023 which identifies the prevailing landscape character type to be *Lowland Farmlands*. Discrete copses and blocks of woodland are not uncommon within this landscape character type particularly around farms. Indeed, there are several such examples in the locality.

This will comprise a mixture of native trees comprising oak, field maple, sycamore, hazel hornbeam and Scots pine. This planting will aid in mitigating the visual impact from public vantage points and the inclusion of Scots pine will provide additional diversity and year round screening. The planting will also connect with existing green infrastructure to create new ecological corridors.

Traffic

The tractor movements during potato harvest season will be more frequent but vehicle movements throughout the rest of the year will be infrequent and so when averaged out, the overall impact will not be adverse or severe. As the building is centrally located in relation to the wider holding, transport impacts on the highway network will not materially increase. The access is wide enough for a large tractor to enter and leave simultaneously and has adequate visibility to serve this agricultural storage need.

Drainage

Surface water soakaway tests have been completed and these verify that ground conditions will support infiltration drainage albeit the infiltration rate is slow. The scheme includes a new suds infiltration basin that will accommodate all roof runoff. This has also been sized to accommodate a peak 1 in a 100 year rainfall event with an additional 40% capacity to allow for the effects of climate change. The use of the building will not generate any dirty water or effluent that requires mitigation or generate any phosphate impact. The pond is permitted development in its own right and does not require prior approval but is included on the plans for completeness.

Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

This is a prior approval application and so is exempt from the BNG regulations. Nevertheless, the location of the building is an arable field that housed a wheat crop until August this year and is now planting up with oilseed rape. Consequently the arable field

habitat that will be lost is of limited biodiversity value. The proposal includes extensive new native tree planting that will create new habitat and the grassland margins within this planting belt will also be allowed to rewild providing foraging and shelter opportunities for birds and other fauna. Additionally, the scheme includes a new sustainable drainage pond that will hold water throughout the year and so this will further broaden the diversity of new habitat that is created. The development will deliver a significant net gain in biodiversity value that will more than compensate for the low value habitat that is being lost.


Summary

There is a functional agricultural need for the proposed potato store to meet the almost 100% increase in potatoes grown on the holding as part of the new [REDACTED] foods contract and the location is relatively central within the 1250 hectare holding to serve the potato growing areas and minimise transport impacts. The siting is the only viable option at this farm and the design and scale is required to meet the storage needs. The external materials will achieve a muted appearance which alongside the extensive landscaping will successfully mitigate the visual and landscape impact of the building as well as enhancing the biodiversity value of the site.

The development therefore accords with the limitations of Part 6 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) and Core Strategy policies SD1 and LD1 in particular.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours faithfully



Russell Pryce MRTPI
Planning Manager
CDB Planning and Architecture