

MEMORANDUM

To : Internal Consultee

From : Mrs D Klein, Planning Services, Blueschool House - H31

Tel : 01432 260136 My Ref : P141574/N

Date : 21st June 2014

SITE: Yeld Farm, Yeld Lane, Lyonshall, Kington, HR5 3LY

APPLICATION TYPE: Waste

DESCRIPTION: Proposed 500Kw Agricultural Digester and ancillary development to produce renewable energy from spent poultry litter and energy crops.

APPLICATION NO: P141574/N

GRID REFERENCE: OS 335303, 256117

APPLICANT: Mr & Mrs S & V Eckley

PARISH: Pembridge

Object ☒

Support ☐

No Objection ☐

Approve with Conditions ☐ (Please list below any conditions you wish to impose on this permission.)

Further information required ☐

Consultation response from: Michael Wade CMLI, Landscape Advice

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The below comments and landscape advice are based on baseline landscape/ environmental information and a visit to the site and its surrounding areas on Thursday 10th July 2014.

Information provided by the applicant includes a:

- Landscape and Visual Appraisal for a Proposed Agricultural Anaerobic Digester at Yeld Farm, Lyonshall, Hereford, HR5 3LY

- 1.2 The site comprises of an arable field on the edge of open countryside to the south east of the existing poultry units at Yeld Farm. The site falls gently to the south and is framed by woodland on the north western boundary. On the north eastern boundary the site is again framed by a mature native tree lined boundary. To the south east and the south west the site is open to the surrounding countryside that of arable land and orchards, both of which are contained by managed native hedgerows. Mature oak trees define this rural setting.

The site is part of the Historic Moor Court Park visual envelope. Moor Court Park is an Unregistered parkland, currently in agricultural and domestic use. There are several views towards the proposed site.

The existing and adjacent poultry units are large in context to other farm units in this area and landscape mitigation measures for these existing poultry units to reduce visual impact show signs of neglect. This is seen in both the maintenance and mitigation proposals for these units. For example newly planted native hedgerows have become swamped by weeds, stunting their growth and screening potential. Cupressocyparis Leylandii which has very little biodiversity value, has been used for screening the soil mounds. This evergreen tree Cupressocyparis Leylandii has no historical association with the adjacent Moor Court parkland or native association with the wider countryside context. These negative visual effects of poor maintenance and inappropriate mitigation have despoiled the landscape in this area. These effects on the landscape are not compliant with the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, which states the conservation, restoration and enhancement of landscapes with development proposals.

- 1.3 A brief description of the proposed development. This application is for an agricultural AD plant with ancillary development. The AD plant will generate electricity and heat, using poultry litter from the farm and energy crops.

2. Planning Context

The planning and the environmental context for the site and its surrounding areas relate to the following key points:

2.1 Planning Legislation

National Planning Policy Framework:

- 9. Protecting the Green Belt.
- 11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan:

- Policy LA2,
- Policy LA4,
- Policy LA5,
- Policy LA6,

2.2 Guidelines:

- Green Infrastructure Strategy, Herefordshire

2.3 Environmental Legislation

- The CROW Act
- Hedgerows
- Sustainable Urban Drainage

3. The Landscape Designations and Constraints

The existing situation of the site and its surroundings relate to the following landscape designation and constraints:

3.1 The Landscape Designations.

There are no landscape designations within the site, but the site does fall within the visual envelope of the Historic Moor Court Parkland.

3.2 The Landscape Constraints to the site and its surroundings

(a) Landscape Character

The Principal Timbered Farmlands landscape character for this area is that of rolling lowland landscapes with occasional steep sided hills and low escarpments. They have a small scale wooded, agricultural appearance characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. These are complex and in many places, intimate landscapes make up a mosaic of small to medium sized fields, irregularly shaped woodlands and winding lanes. The key element of these landscapes is the strong unifying presence of tree cover in the guise of woodlands, hedgerow trees and linear tree cover associated with streams and watercourses. The combined presence of these tree cover components create the fundamental sense of scale and enclosure, together with the filtered views that are distinctive in this landscape. The woodlands are of ancient semi-natural character, comprising mixed native broadleaved species, with oak being dominant. Lines of mature oak are a particular feature of the hedgerows, which are visually very dominant. They are usually species rich, complex habitats supporting a wide range of flora and fauna as well as the numerous hedgerow trees. The scale and shape of the woodlands is also important, ranging in size from small field corner copses to those of a size exceeding that of the surrounding fields. The irregular outline of many of the woodlands, together with the pattern of hedgerows and winding lanes, contributes to the overall organic character of this landscape. A densely dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages is typical with a notable number of buildings constructed out of brick and timber.

(b) Landscape Function and Value

The site and its surrounding area represents the Principal Timbered Farmlands landscape character of this part of Herefordshire, providing public visual amenity, agriculture, rural recreation and biodiversity value. This intimate landscape with its mosaic of small to medium sized fields and woodlands represents the landscape function and value of this area. Within this intimate landscape context the existing poultry units adjacent to the proposed site are large in context to other farm units in this area. An increase in scale of this existing development would therefore compound the development presence in this landscape. Public views of the existing poultry units and the proposed site can be seen from PRoW PM46.

The site is also part of the visual envelope of the unregistered Moor Court Park. The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Policy LA4 states:

'Development which would destroy, damage or otherwise adversely affect the historic structure, character, appearance, features or settings (including the designed visual envelope) of a registered park or garden will not be permitted'.

'Unregistered parks and gardens recognised and identified by the Council as currently of local importance will be afforded similar protection',

The proposed development therefore when seen from the PRoW PM46 within the parkland visual envelope, would adversely affect the historic character and appearance of this parkland setting.

(c) Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity to Absorb Development

The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Policy LA2 Landscape Character states:

'Proposals for new development that would adversely affect either the overall character of the landscape, as defined by the Landscape Character Assessment and the Historic Landscape Characterization or its key attributes or features will not be permitted'.

'Proposals should demonstrate that landscape character has influenced their design, scale, nature and site selection. Where appropriate, developers will be encouraged to restore degraded or despoiled landscapes to their inherent character'.

The Principal Timbered Farmlands landscape character for this area has been despoiled by the poor screening maintenance and inappropriate screening measures for the existing poultry units.

Due to the large scale of the existing poultry units, further development in this proposed area that of high building units would adversely affect the Landscape Character of the Principal Timbered Farmlands and the Historic Parkland Landscape when seen from the PRoW PM46.

(d) Natural Landscape and Biodiversity

The existing north eastern tree hedgerow boundary and north western woodland boundary are likely to provide good habitat for flora and fauna, although the ecological interest of the proposed site is limited due to its agricultural use.

With reference to the Landscape Mitigation Strategy, Figure 1.4, Dated 24/04/2014, the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Policy LA6 Landscape schemes 3, states:

'Include new landscape works to ensure development integrates appropriately into its surroundings in terms of scale, enhances any existing character and features and especially takes the opportunity to remove eyesores and improve disfigured or despoiled land'.

As the existing adjacent poultry units relate to this proposal, mitigation and screening for the proposal should have enhanced the inadequate mitigation and screening of the poultry units adjacent to the proposed site. Native trees and shrubs which associate with the natural landscape and offer biodiversity value should have replaced the present screening that of Cupressocyparis Leylandii.

(e) Visual and Public Amenity

Within the visual envelope of the site there are several views of the site proposal and these can be seen in a limited way from nearby roads and in a major way from public rights of way. No direct views can be seen from residential properties, however there may be some views of the upper section of the proposed tanks from Moorcot.

From the A44 main road which links Leominster to Kington travelling in a westerly direction there are likely to be limited views of the roof of the plant.

From public rights of way the site is visually contained to the immediate north to north west by woodland. However there are several Public Rights of Way to the south which do have views of the site proposal.

The Public Right of Way PM46, an eastward extension of the PRoW PM43 footpath towards Moor Court Parkland and Western Court Farm, running along the block of woodland to the immediate north to north west of the site is completely exposed to the development and passes within 10m of the site.

The developments proposed height and connection with the existing poultry units will change the character of the view when seen from this footpath PM46 to a view of a large scale agricultural complex. This view is within the visual envelope of Moor Court Parkland. With reference to the UDP Policy LA4, this new view is adversely affecting the historic structure, character and appearance of the Parkland when seen from the proposed development area.

The proposed development will also be seen in conjunction with the existing poultry units from footpath PM46, creating a major cumulative visual impact. The roofs of the poultry units will also be visible in elevated views from the south east therefore the addition of the AD plant will have a minor cumulative effect in views from the south east.

With reference to public amenity, a PRoW footpath PM43 which enters the existing site of poultry units from the north is block due to a gate which crosses the footpath being locked. This contravenes UDP Policy RST6 Countryside access.

4. Conclusion

From a landscape related perspective I object to this application on the following basis. The site falls within the visual envelope of the Historic Moor Court Parkland. A PRoW PM46 which is part of the Historic Moor Court Parkland runs parallel, adjacent and in near proximity to the proposal.

The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan states:

- Policy LA2

'Proposals for new development that would adversely affect either the overall character of the landscape, as defined by the Landscape Character Assessment and the Historic Landscape Characterization or its key attributes or features will not be permitted'.

- Policy LA4

'Development which would adversely affect the historic structure, character, appearance, features or setting of a registered or unregistered park would not be permitted'.

SIGNED : Michael Wade CMLI, Landscape Consultant

DATED RETURNED : 21th July 2014