

MEMORANDUM

To : Mr R Close, Planning Services, Blueschool House – H31
From : Mr M Wade, Landscape Advice, Blueschool House
Tel : My Ref : P141669/O
Date : 24 July 2014

SITE: Losito Stud, Whitchurch, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 6EG
APPLICATION TYPE: Outline
DESCRIPTION: Outline planning all matters reserved for a main residential house at Losito stud.
APPLICATION NO: P141669/O
GRID REFERENCE: OS 355624, 218603
APPLICANT: Miss Karen Harris
WEBSITE: www.herefordshire.gov.uk/searchplanningapplications

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 Wednesday 23rd July 2014. Information provided by the applicant includes a Design and Access Statement for outline planning for a main residential house at Losito Stud and a plan showing the outline of the proposed development.
- 1.2 The site Losito Stud comprises of land situated to the east of Whitchurch. This land is located beyond the village settlement boundary on the eastern side of the A4137. The village settlement boundary runs in a north westerly direction along the A4137 at this point. The land is currently screened with a native hedgerow which runs in a north westerly direction parallel to the A4137. From the south, the southern boundary of the land is presently screened by a native hedgerow and mature native trees. From the north west the land is screened by the topography and existing hedgerow vegetation.
- Two public rights of way cross the land in a north easterly direction giving open views of the proposed new dwelling. The north westerly footpath is footpath WC93 and the south easterly footpath is footpath WC94.
- 1.3 A brief description of the proposed development. This outline application is for a main residential house, with all matters reserved for future consideration.
- 1.4 The application site is situated about 20m north of the existing horse stables in the southern central part of the wider land ownership. The application site is located approx 390m to the north west of the north extreme of the settlement boundary of Whitchurch and in access of 1200m from the centre of the village.

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

Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

- DR7 Flood Risk
- LA1 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- LA2 Landscape Character
- LA3 Setting of settlements
- S1 Sustainable development

2.2 Environmental Legislation

- The CROW Act
- Hedgerows
- Public Rights of Way

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.

The site lies within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is outside the settlement boundary of Whitchurch. The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Written Statement, Adopted March 2007 LA1, states the following with reference to the AONB.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- (a) *'Within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, priority will be given to the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the area in the national interest and in accordance with the relevant management plans'.*
- (b) *'Development will only be permitted where it is small scale, does not adversely affect the intrinsic natural beauty of the landscape and is necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of the designated areas and their communities or can enhance the quality of the landscape or biodiversity'.*
- (c) Exceptions to this policy will only be permitted when all of the following have been demonstrated:
 - (i) *'The development is of greater national interest than the purpose of the AONB'.*
 - (ii) *'There are is unlikely to be any adverse impact upon the local economy'.*

- (iii) *'No alternative site is available, including outside the AONB; and'*
- (iv) *'Any detrimental effect upon the landscape, biodiversity and historic assets can be mitigated adequately and, where appropriate, compensatory measures provided'.*

3.2 The Landscape Constraints to the site and its surroundings

(a) Landscape Character

The Principal Settled Farmlands landscape character for this area is that of rolling lowland. These are settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. The mixed farming land use reflects the good soils on which they are typically found. Networks of small winding lanes nestling within a matrix of hedged fields are characteristic. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourse. The composition of the hedgerow tree covers differs from that of Timbered Farmlands in its lower density and lack of oak dominance. This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern and nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands.

(b) Landscape Function and Value

The land represents the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape character of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This landscape function is for both public visual amenity, recreation, agriculture and biodiversity value. Outside the settlement boundaries, hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of the Principal Settled Farmlands in this area.

(c) Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity to Absorb Development

The landscape quality of the land has been historically undermined through quarry works and then through landfill. The south eastern section of the land is also in a flood plain. Access to the land is restricted to the A4137 which is a two lane road with no footpaths either side of the road and also has fast traffic.

(d) Natural Landscape and Biodiversity

The hedgerow boundaries and trees both on site and in the adjacent areas are likely to provide good habitat for flora and fauna, although the ecological interest of the field is probably limited, as it is a semi-improved grassland.

(e) Visual and Public Amenity

The two public rights of way, WC93 in the north west and WC94 in the south east which cross the land in a north easterly direction have views of the

proposed site which is near to the existing horse stables. The views are seen in a backdrop of a grassland field which slopes down from the north west to the south east. From PRow WC93 footpath there are also long distance views outside the site, across the valley to the east to Coppet Hill and to the south to Symonds Yat. These long distance views relate to the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4. Potential effects on Landscape Designations and Landscape Constraints

4.1 The Landscape Designations

(a) AONB

The proposal for a new dwelling building near to and adjacent to the existing horse stables would have a cumulative negative visual impact when seen from the nearby public rights of way. The proposal would therefore not enhance the natural beauty and amenity value of this field when seen in the wider context of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

(b) Village settlement boundary

The A4137 represents a significant physical and visual barrier to the north of the Whitchurch settlement boundary. The site proposal on the eastern side of the A4137 is neither adjacent or adjoining the settlement boundary. My site visit also suggested that the A4137 it is not a safe road for pedestrians or cyclists to easily cross due to apparent vehicle flows and speeds and lack of footpaths on the A4137.

4.2 The Landscape Constraints

(a) Landscape Character

The landscape character of this area is that of rolling hills, grazed pastures and arable fields, surrounded by hedgerows. Further development outside the village settlement boundary would reduce these traditional landscape characteristics of this rural landscape.

(b) Landscape Function and Value

The landscape function and value of this area which is outside the village settlement area, is that of public visual amenity, recreation, agricultural and biodiversity value. This proposal will deplete the visual amenity and recreational public value of this field by the loss of existing grassland.

(c) Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity to Absorb Development

Access

It is understood that this is an outline planning application with all matters reserved including vehicular means of access. Due to the proposals proximity to the existing horse stables, it is assumed that there will be use of the existing vehicular access of the A4137 at the south eastern extreme of the land ownership. If there are no highway objections to the use of this existing access and only visibility requirements, my concern would be the removal of hedgerow at this entrance for these visibility requirements. This would open the site when seen from both the road and open views of the road when seen from footpath WC94.

If there was a creation of a new vehicular access at some point to the north west of this existing access point, it is understood that a new access would require visibility splays of 2m x 160m. Even if this can be achieved, I would strongly object to the loss of a significant section of mature native hedgerow for this access proposal. Any new vehicular access to the north west of the existing access point would also have a negative visual impact.

Flood Risk

The dwelling proposal is adjacent to an area of flood risk. This flood risk area is to the east of the proposal about 20m away. With climate change flood risk will increase in the future and so development should not be permitted in this area.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development among other things includes protecting and enhancing the natural environment and respecting patterns of local distinctiveness and landscape character. This includes the safeguarding of landscape quality and visual amenity, especially in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

(d) Natural Landscape and Biodiversity

The hedgerow boundaries and associated trees are likely to provide good habitat for flora and fauna. If access proposals are made to join the A4137 which require the removal of hedgerows and trees for visibility splay reasons this would deplete the natural landscape and biodiversity of this area.

(e) Visual and Public amenity

There will be a high visual impact when the proposal is seen from the nearby Public Right of Way WC94 which is in the southern part of the site, crossing the site in a south western, north eastern direction. This high visual impact will also have a cumulative effect due to the existing nearby existing buildings.

There will also be a high visual impact when the proposal is seen from Public Right of Way WC93 in the northern part of the site which crosses the site in a south western, north eastern direction. This elevated view from this footpath on the highest point of the land, has long distance views to the south and east of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Further development outside the village settlement area on this application site will deplete the visual and public amenity of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty when seen from this footpath.

5. Conclusion

From a landscape related perspective, I object to the principle of this development on this site. This is based on the application site being outside the village settlement area, in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, LA1 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, states :

- (a) 'Within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, priority will be given to the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the area in the national interest and in accordance with the relevant management plans'.
- (b) 'Development will only be permitted where it is small scale, does not adversely affect the intrinsic natural beauty of the landscape and is necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of the designated areas and their communities or can enhance the quality of the landscape or biodiversity'.

This application outside the village settlement area of Whitchurch in the AONB, does not protect and enhance the natural beauty and amenity of the AONB and does adversely affect the intrinsic natural beauty of the landscape by its cumulative visual impact.

SIGNED : Michael Wade CMLI, Landscape Consultant

DATED RETURNED : 24th July 2014