

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER 130348/F



Stoke Prior Village Hall, Stoke Prior, HR6 0LG

CASE OFFICER: Mr Matt Tompkins
DATE OF SITE VISIT: 18/03/13

Relevant Development Plan Policies: Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan
DR2 – Land use and activity
DR14 – Lighting
LA2 – Landscape character and areas least resilient to change
LA6 – Landscaping schemes
CF5 – New community facilities

National Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Site History: None applicable to this application

CONSULTATIONS

| | Consulted | No Response | No objection | Qualified Comment | Object |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|--------|
| Parish Council | X | | X | | |
| Transportation | X | | X | | |
| Ecologist/Landscape Officer | X | | | X | |
| Trees | X | X | | | |
| Open Spaces | X | X | | | |
| Ramblers | X | X | | | |
| PROW | X | | X | | |
| Neighbour letter/ Site Notice | X | | | X | |
| Local Member | X | | X | | |

PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL:

Site description and proposal:

The Village Hall is located centrally within the small settlement of Stoke Prior in close proximity to Tagfield Cottage and Prior Cottage. The application seeks planning permission for the gravelled surfacing of a car park to the east of the village hall accessed from Normans Lane along a small strip of land whose ownership is unknown. The site is located at the bottom of a field which slopes down steadily from the south to the north. It is well bound on all sides by existing hedgerows. The site would abut the southern residential boundary of the curtilage of Hopton Cottage.

Representations:

- The **local member** has been contacted and is happy for the application to be dealt with under delegated powers.
- **10 Letters of representation** were received stating that:
 - The car park would be welcomed to alleviate parking on the narrow road to the front of the village hall.
 - The ease of access for the elderly and disabled is welcomed. No access currently for independent disabled drivers.
 - The area disclosed within the application was not sufficient to meet the highway.
 - That there is no right of way across what is labelled 'C' on the site plan, effectively disallowing access between the highway and the car park.
 - The drainage from Normans Lane and surrounding fields currently runs down a gully to the side of the lane which stops at the proposed driveway start point. If driveway is lined, water will travel along path and cause potential flooding at the village hall.
- The **parish council** resolved to support the application.
- The councils **ecologist** is of the opinion that the application is in principle acceptable. It does however need to be made clear what the redundant area of land between the new private driveway and the roadside hedge will be used for and how it will be maintained. Furthermore, a habitat protection scheme and working method statement are recommended to be attached via condition.

Pre-application discussion:

Comprehensive pre-application discussions were held regarding the correct process, the principle of the proposal, layout of the site, necessary statements and other minor details. Effort has been made to adhere to the pre-application advice given.

Constraints:

Initially the application site failed to meet the highway, a requisite of any application. However amendments were made ensuring that this criterion was met. The land referred to as part 'C' on the site plan is not under the ownership of the applicants, neither is it under the ownership of any known party. The applicants were made aware at pre-app stage that the rightful owner of land 'C' could at any time deny them over said land, however this is a civil matter.

Appraisal:

At present users of the village hall are forced to either walk along narrow lanes without the provision of a pavement or to drive and park on the narrow lane outside of the village hall. This setup raises concern due to few parking places being available and where cars are able to park, the lane is narrowed to a width which is of detriment to highways safety and the local traffic flow. Furthermore, there is no where for disabled drivers to park and inadequate access to the hall for the elderly or disabled.

Consequently this application has been submitted for the provision of a car park in relation to the existing village hall. The chief policy against which it falls to be considered is CF5 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. This indicates that the provision of new or improved community facilities will be permitted subject to the satisfaction of listed criteria. In this instance, criterion 1, 3 and 4 are of particular relevance. The proposal must be of an appropriate scale proportionate to the need of the local community, reflect the character of the location, not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents, incorporate safe, convenient pedestrian access and provide car and cycle parking.

The scheme will alleviate concerns regarding highways safety and access for all, whilst the provision of 8 parking spaces in relation to the village hall (with 2 disabled spaces) is considered commensurate the apparent need. A pathway between the car park and the village hall will provide pedestrian access suitable for use by all persons. The exact details of the path, including precise dimensions, construction materials and proposed finish levels will need to be provided via condition. A cycle storage area is also to be provided.

The occupiers of The Bryn and Hopton Cottage would be the most effected by the proposal. The car parks location at the south-western extreme of the site ensures not only that it is as close to the village hall as possible, but also further away from the two aforementioned dwellings. This is particularly pertinent in relation to Hopton Cottage. Existing vegetation and the sloping topography will further ensure that the car park has no measurable impact on Hopton Cottage. The impact on The Bryn would primarily relate to the increase in traffic on the track known as "Norman's Lane". However, due to the sporadic, light use of the car park the impact would be negligible.

The car park will make use of existing hedgerow which bounds the application site. This will screen the car park from local views, particularly from the foot path to the south. However, the level of screening afforded is not considered to be great enough to fully mitigate the provision of the car park. Consequently a condition will be attached to any approval requiring the further planting of hedgerows along the site boundaries. Furthermore, this would go some way to alleviating the negative ecological impact which would occur as a consequence of proposed hedgerow removal.

It is considered that the submitted ecological statement is too simplistic and as a consequence does not the requisite detail with regards to the impact of the proposed works. It is not currently clear how existing vegetation will be cleared from the site and how the footway between the village hall and the car park will be created. Furthermore, it is not clear what is planned for the underdeveloped areas of the site, although they should remain "unmanaged". The planting of a wildflower hedgebank mix such as from Emorsgate (EH1) would be appropriate between the hedgerow and the new access road. The above will be dealt with by way of conditions attached to any approval given.

The drainage of the site is crucial particularly due to a ditch terminating at the point where the access road would be located. It is essential that the access road would be porous to allow natural drainage to continue at an unaffected rate. The "engineer's recommendations" as indicated on the site plan, should be disclosed including the details of both the surface material of the car park and access drive and any lining to be placed beneath. These details should be submitted by way of a condition attached to any approval given.

The application is considered to enhance the use of an existing community facility according with local and national policies and is hereby recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: **PERMIT** **REFUSE**

CONDITION(S) & REASON(S) / REASON(S) FOR REFUSAL:

1. C01
2. C06 – Project 12-13 drawing number 1 revision B (amended 18/03/2013)
3. CD2
4. Prior to the commencement of development a full working method statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the work shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure that all species are protected having regard to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Policies NCI, NC6 and NC7 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

5. C96 – Soft Landscaping: b, c. Hard Landscaping: a, d, f.
6. If the village hall ceases to exist, within 6 months of it doing so, the site hereby permitted for use as a car park shall be returned to its previous state and agricultural use.

Reason: In order to maintain the visual amenities of the area and to conform with policies DR2, LA2 and CF5 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

7. Prior to the first use of the hereby permitted car park, the cycle storage area as defined on the site plan [Project 12-13 drawing number 1 revision B (amended 18/03/2013)] shall be erected.

Reason: To ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle storage within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with both local and national policy and to conform with the requirements of policy DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.