

4.6 – SE/12/02106/FUL Date expired 17 October 2012

PROPOSAL: Erection of wooden shed on existing concrete base for the storage of straw bedding, animal feed and mowing equipment, on agricultural land. (Retrospective).

LOCATION: Land East Of The White House, Blakes Green Road, Seal

WARD(S): Seal & Weald

ITEM FOR DECISION

This application has been reported to Development Control Committee at the request of Councillor Thornton on the grounds that the wooden structure is prominent in the landscape and detracts from the openness of the surrounding countryside and also that the location of the construction is not sensitive to the field in which it stands.

RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:-

1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:- Block Plan, dated July 2012, stamped 22 August 2012;- Drawing Number EL01, dated 07/08/2012, stamped 9 August 2012;- Drawing Number EL02, dated 03/09/2012, stamped 4 September 2012;- Drawing Number SK03, dated 17/08/2012, stamped 20 August 2012;

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2) No external lighting shall be installed on the application site or on the wooden shed.

To protect the amenity of the area and the residential amenities of nearby dwellings as supported by policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, policies SP1 and LO8 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3) The wooden structure hereby approved shall be used for agricultural purposes only.

To prevent inappropriate development in the Green Belt as supported by the National Planning Policy Framework.

4) Within one month of the permission hereby approved, full details of soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. Those details shall include:-planting plans (identifying existing planting, plants to be retained and new planting);-a schedule of new plants (noting species, size of stock at time of planting and proposed number/densities); and-a programme of implementation.

To ensure that the appearance of the development is in harmony with the existing character of the area as supported by Policy LO8 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy.

In determining this application, the Local Planning Authority has had regard to the following Development Plan Policy:

Sevenoaks District Core Strategy: LO8, SP1

Sevenoaks District Local Plan: EN1

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the decision:

The wooden shed (to be used for agricultural purposes) is appropriate development within the Green Belt and is in accordance with Section 9 (paragraph 89) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Any potentially significant impacts on the amenities of nearby dwellings can be satisfactorily mitigated by way of the conditions imposed.

Description of Proposal

- 1 Permission is sought retrospectively for the erection of a wooden shed which will be used for the storage of straw bedding, animal feed and mowing equipment. The shed is approximately 7.4m long (plus a 1.8m roof overhang at each end) and is approximately 2.6m tall to its ridge.
- 2 The shed is positioned on an existing concrete base. A water tank was previously situated on the concrete base. This was 1.82 metres high and 4.57 metres wide.

Description of Site

- 3 The site is situated within the Seal and Weald Ward, within Seal Parish. The site comprises a triangular shaped piece of land north of Stone Street Cricket Ground. The site is approximately 1ha in size and is bordered by mature trees along the eastern and western boundaries.
- 4 The closest residential dwellings are located approximately 70 metres to the west of the site. The site is rural in nature with the surrounding land-uses being agricultural. Bitchet Farm is situated immediately to the north of the land.

Constraints

- 5 Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- 6 Area of Special Control of Advertisement
- 7 Metropolitan Green Belt

Policies

Sevenoaks District Local Plan

- 8 Policy - EN1

Sevenoaks District Core Strategy

- 9 Policies - SP1, LO8

Other

- 10 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

11 Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Planning History

- 12 SE/80/01711/HIST – Renewal of limited period permission SE/76/01402 for the retention of solar dome plastic tunnels, storage building and water tank for horticultural use (refused 7 January 1981).

SE/77/01459/HIST – Erection of detached garage for use as a horticultural store (refused 11 May 1978).

SE/76/01402/HIST – Erection of solar dome plastic tunnels, storage building and water tank for horticultural use (granted 17 March 1977).

Planning History Background

- 13 Temporary planning permission SE/76/01402/HIST was approved for the erection of solar dome plastic tunnels (six in all), storage building and water tank. The water tank was 1.82 metres high and 4.57 metres wide and the storage building approved was 3 metres wide, 6.1 metres long and 2.5 metres high. This storage building was timber framed building finished externally in weatherboarding and felt clad. The six approved solar dome plastic tunnels were 4.57 metres wide and 17.6 metres long.
- 14 Planning permission SE/77/01459/HIST sought approval for the erection of a concrete prefabricated garage building (with ‘Sparlite’ aggregate external finish), which for the reasons of security and fire risk, was to replace the approved timber framed storage building under previous planning reference SE/76/01402/HIST. It was noted by the Planning Officer of the time (within the delegated report) that the approved storage building had not been erected on the site. Ultimately this amendment (i.e. replacing the approved timber shed with a concrete garage) was refused as the proposal would have been detrimental to the visual amenities of the area.
- 15 Finally permission was sought in 1980 to renew the limited period permission SE/76/01402/HIST. This was subsequently refused. The Officers report stated that the site had fallen into a derelict state and there was no evidence of any horticultural activity taking place on the site. It was noted that the plastic coverings on the solar dome and tunnels were in tatters and there was a considerable growth of weeds. It was concluded that the applicant had had a sufficient time in which to establish a horticultural enterprise on the site but had failed to do so.

Consultations

Seal Parish Council

- 16 The wooden structure is prominent in the landscape and detracts from the openness of the surrounding countryside, which is designated to be conserved and reinforced in the SPD Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment, which has been adopted.
- 17 The location of the construction is not sensitive to the field in which it stands, and makes no use of the natural lie of the land or hedgerows, which would reduce the

prominent form of the building in the landscape. The Parish Council would strongly object to any excessive forms of lighting in this sensitive area.

Rural Planning Limited

- 18 I note that the application relates to a triangular parcel of grassland, extending to about 1ha, which was in use for grazing of horses until more recently purchased by the applicant. His intention is to use the site as a smallholding for fattening a small number of pigs, keeping some free range hens for eggs, planting a small orchard, and possibly growing a small area of root vegetables (as supplementary pig feed).
- 19 The shed applied for is of modest extent, approximately 7.4m long (plus a 1.8m roof overhang at each end) x 3.7m wide, and about 2.6m tall to its ridge. I would agree with the applicant that it is no bigger than necessary, and is suitably designed, for the stated agricultural purposes.

Ward Councillors

- 20 Councillor Hogarth: No comments received.
- 21 Councillor Thornton: Requested that the application be heard at Development Control Committee. Agreed with Seal Parish comments.

Representations

5 No. letters of objection received from 3 local residents

- 22 A number of points were raised, a summary of the letters are enclosed below:
- It is an undesirable construction in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - The so called concrete base was used for a water tank and not a shed;
 - What is the purpose of the development involving animal feeds and is this the start of further applications?
 - Object to any possibility of the farming of pigs which could give rise to unpleasant odours. This might well have an adverse effect on the values of our own and other neighbouring residential properties;
 - In the coming winter months when the boundary trees are not in leaf the shed will be in full view and visible from not only all surrounding roads but also from the properties to the West;
 - If permission were to be granted, we would ask whether some shrub planting could be incorporated to the west of the building;
 - Steps might be taken in the future either to alter the building to form a holiday chalet or permanent dwelling or to replace it with a new dwelling. Such proposals would be inconsistent with the tight-knit character of the hamlet of The Coppice and harmful to its rural setting. Written assurance should be given by the applicant that it is not his intention to apply in the future for any residential use of the site.

- 23 A number of concerns were raised by neighbours that the wooden shed was not built on an existing concrete base. The Planning Agent confirmed via letter (dated 26 September 2012) that the concrete base was pre-existing. This was supported by a letter from Ibbett Mosely (dated 25 September 2012) which stated:

I have inspected the area where you have erected the timber outbuilding and can confirm that the concrete pad is the same as it was when we sold it to you. This is quite evident from the colour of the concrete and there is no evidence of any extension work having been carried out.

Group Manager - Planning Services Appraisal

Principal Issues

Design, Scale and Bulk

- 24 Policy SP1 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy states that all new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated.
- 25 Policy EN1 of the SDLP states that the form of the proposed development including buildings should be compatible in terms of scale and height with other buildings in the locality. The design should be in harmony with adjoining buildings and incorporate materials of a high standard.
- 26 It is considered that the wooden shed is acceptable in terms of design and scale. The timber panelling is considered to be an appropriate material in the location. The Agricultural Consultant has agreed with the applicant that the shed is no bigger than necessary and is suitably designed for the stated agricultural purposes.
- 27 It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of design, scale and bulk and is in accordance with Policy SP1 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy and Policy EN1 of the SDLP.

Green Belt

- 28 Section 9, paragraph 87 of the NPPF states that as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 29 Notwithstanding this, paragraph 89 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:
- Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- 30 It is therefore recognised that the wooden shed, which is to be used for the storage of straw bedding, animal feed and mowing equipment is considered to be appropriate development within the Green Belt with the intention to use the land as an agricultural small holding. Such a building and use is entirely common given the rural nature of the site. There are number of examples of comparable buildings in the area.

- 31 As documented in the Planning History section, the permission has been previously approved on the land to be used for horticultural purposes. The wooden shed has been built on an existing concrete pad, which previously had a water tank on it and originally was constructed for the approved timber storage building in 1977. The water tank was of a modest scale and whilst it is recognised that the wooden shed is larger, it is considered that the building is not significantly materially larger than this water tank. It is also noted that large scale solar domes have been previously erected on the site (albeit for a temporary period) which far exceed the scale of the wooden shed under consideration. Although planning permission was refused under reference SE/80/01711/HIST, the reason for refusal was more related to the derelict state of the site, as opposed to the scale of the water tank / solar domes on the site.
- 32 In addition it is considered that by re-using the concrete pad, the requirement to develop the land further has been prevented.
- 33 A condition will be attached to any granted permission restricting the use of the shed for agricultural purposes only.
- 34 It is therefore considered that the wooden shed (to be used for agricultural purposes) is appropriate development within the Green Belt and is in accordance with Section 9 (paragraph 89) of the NPPF.

Character and Openness

- 35 Policy L08 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy states that the extent of the Green Belt will be maintained. In addition the policy states that the countryside will be conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity will be protected and enhanced where possible. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs AONB and their settings will be conserved and enhanced.
- 36 The Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD states that the Seal Chart landscape has a strong distinct nature and ensures that the landscape is visually unified. Within this strong framework, the location of roads, farms and villages corresponds to the landform. The landscape is considered to be in a very good condition.
- 37 It has been established above that the proposal is acceptable in terms of design, scale and bulk and the use of such a shed in such a location is appropriate in the Green Belt. It is considered that the wooden shed is a typical agricultural structure one might expect to see in a field. It has already been ascertained that it is of a modest scale and design (appropriate materials). Concern has however been raised as to the positioning of the shed and its visibility and prominence at the site. Whilst it is accepted that the shed will be visible from certain viewpoints along the highway bordering the piece of land, there is a mature tree line along the eastern and western edge of the plot of land. It must also be recognised that the land has been used previously for horticulture purposes (as documented in the Planning History section) and that a modest sized water tank was situated on the concrete base until relatively recently. Notwithstanding this, despite the appropriate scale and agricultural appearance of the wooden shed it seems reasonable to attach a planning condition to any approved consent requiring the submission of a landscaping scheme to further soften the appearance of the building.

- 38 Therefore based on the principle that the design, scale and use of the building is appropriate in its location, it is considered that the development will not cause a detrimental impact on the AONB or Seal Chart landscape.

Other Issues

Residential Amenity

- 39 The wooden shed is approximately 70 metres from the closest residential dwelling. Given the scale of the wooden shed, it is not considered that the development will result in a loss of residential amenity to the closest residents.
- 40 Concerns have been raised in relation to lighting at the site. A condition can be secured to ensure that no external lighting is used on the site or on the wooden shed.

Environmental Concerns

- 41 Some neighbours have raised concerns in regards to the smell of pigs at the site. Whilst it is accepted that the agricultural holding may create an odour which was not previously present, the site was used as a field for grazing horses for a number of years. Importantly no planning application is actually required to use the land for pig farming. It is also recognised the rural nature of the site and the nearby farm at Bitchet Farm.

Conclusion

- 42 It is considered that the proposal is in accordance with paragraph 89 of the NPPF, Policies L08 and SP1 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy, Policy EN1 of the SDLP and the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD.

Background Papers

Site and Block Plans

Contact Officer(s): Neal Thompson Extension: 7463

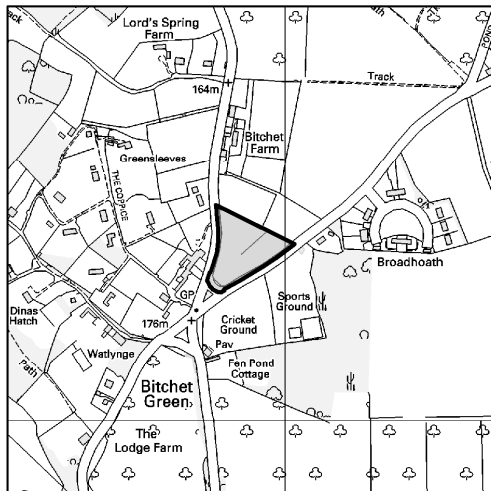
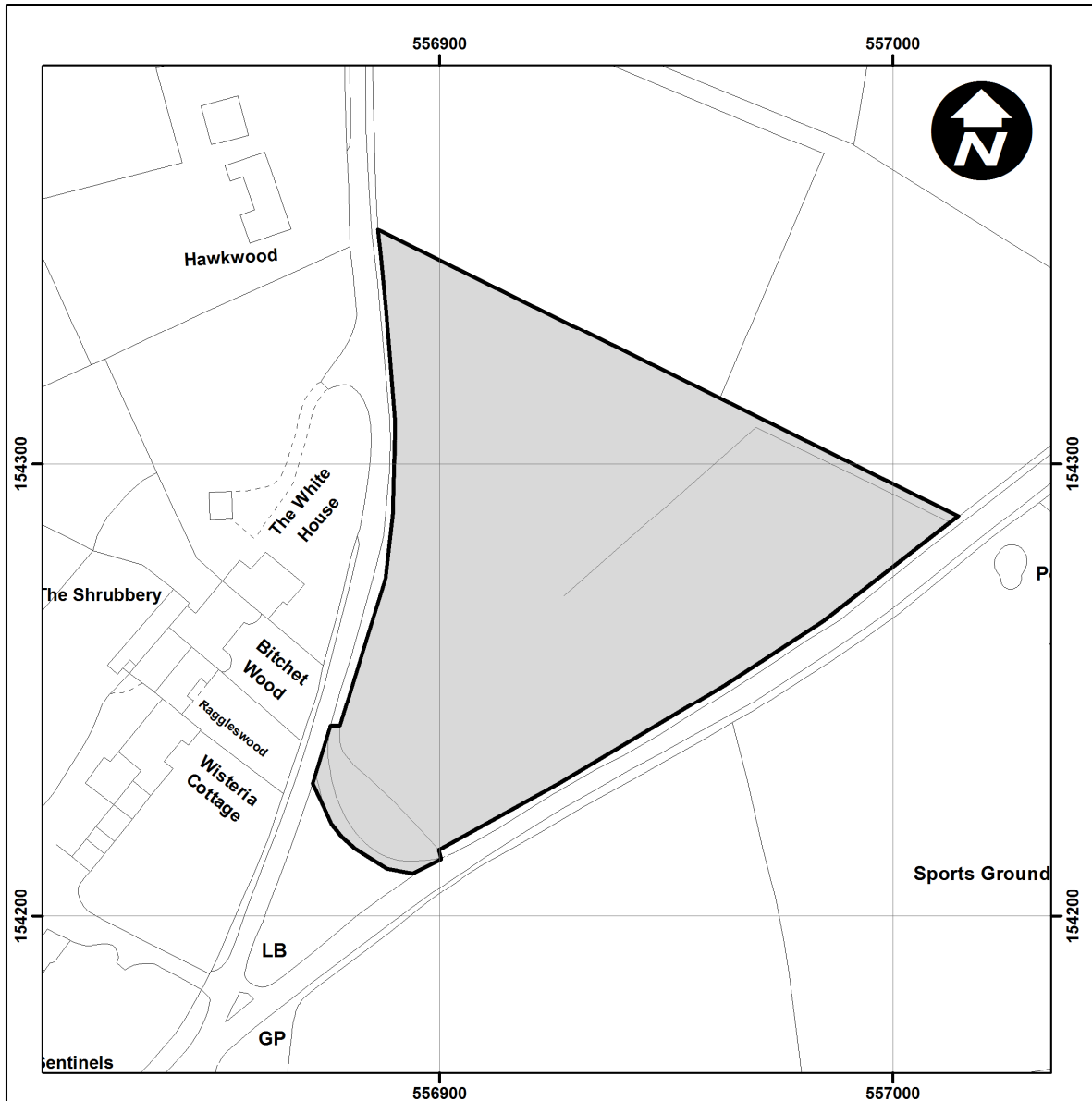
Kristen Paterson
Community and Planning Services Director

Link to application details:

<http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=M8HJSOBK0L000>

Link to associated documents:

<http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=M8HJSOBK0L000>



Site Plan

Scale 1:1,250

Date 25.10.2012



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Sevenoaks District Council, 100019428, 2012

BLOCK PLAN

