

**REPORT TO THE EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Report No. 1

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2010
<b>Application Number</b>	E/10/0107/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Bromham House Farm, Devizes Road, Bromham, Wilts SN15 2DX
<b>Proposal</b>	Retrospective Change of Use of Land & Buildings for the Parking & Storage of Vehicles, Plant & Equipment Pending Preparation for Sale or Export; Improvements to Road Junction
<b>Applicant</b>	Mr Jim Butler
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	BROMHAM
<b>Grid Ref</b>	397506 165854
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Rob Parker

**Reason for the application being considered by Committee**

This application is before the Committee at the request of the Division Member, Cllr Brown.

**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the recommendation that the application be refused.

**2. Report Summary**

The main issues in this case are the impact upon visual amenity and landscape character, and the impacts upon highway safety and neighbour amenity.

**3. Site Description**

This application relates to Bromham House Farm which lies in the countryside on the eastern outskirts of Bromham. The entrance to Bromham House Farm lies on the A342 Devizes to Chippenham road, immediately opposite the northern turning into Highfield.



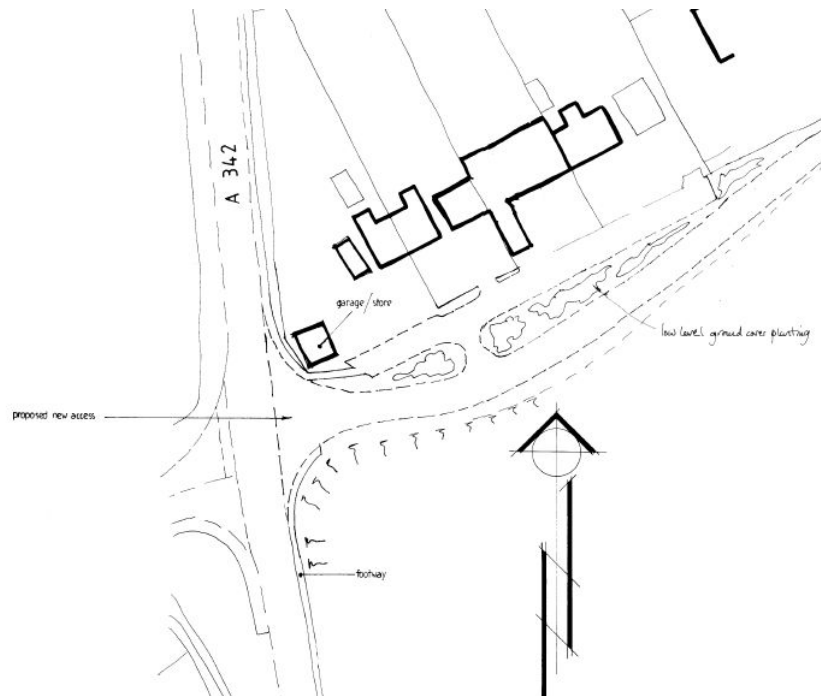
*Site Location – East of A342 Devizes – Chippenham road*

#### **4. Relevant Planning History**

E/09/1093/FUL - Change of use of land and buildings to allow the parking and storage of vehicles, plant and equipment pending preparation for sale or export; Improvements to road junction. Application withdrawn by applicant on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

#### **5. The Proposal**

The proposal is for a retrospective change of use of land & buildings for the parking & storage of vehicles, plant & equipment pending preparation for sale or export. As part of the proposal the junction onto the A342 would be improved (see drawing below). The changes also include a proposed slip road to serve the dwellings closest to the A342 junction.



## 6. Planning Policy

Kennet Local Plan 2011 - policies PD1, NR6 & NR7 are relevant to the consideration of this planning application. Supplementary Planning Guidance contained in the Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy is also a material consideration. Government guidance contained in PPS4: 'Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth' is relevant.

## 7. Consultations

Bromham Parish Council – no objections, supports the amended plan to include 4 Roughmoor Cottages in the proposed slip road.

Wiltshire Council Highways – no objections, subject to a condition requiring the junction improvements and access road alterations to be carried out within 6 months.

Wiltshire Council Landscape Consultant – no objections in principle, subject to:

- Storage areas being confined to areas E and F on the plans;
- The height of vehicles stored on the site being restricted to 4.3 metres; and
- Landscaping detail being supplied as part of the application.

## 8. Publicity

The application has been advertised by press and site notices. Neighbour notification has also been carried out.

Representations have been received from the owner/occupiers of 2, 3 & 4 Roughmoor Cottages. These properties front onto the access road leading to Bromham House Farm and would be directly affected by the proposed junction improvements. Neither neighbour has any objection to the proposals. They make the following additional comments:

- The bank between the two roads should be maintained as grass with perhaps some kerbing to retain the soil and refurbishment to the ruts in the existing

road (which will be retained as a cul-de-sac as part of the proposals).

- The proposed new access will greatly improve visibility when exiting onto the A342, and will allow drivers travelling along the A342 better visibility of vehicles exiting onto the A342.
- The proposal to retain the existing road for residents' access will also be an improvement when exiting their properties giving improved visibility and improving safety for residents.

A further representation of objection has been received from the owner/occupier of 52 Highfield. The respondent considers that the proposal would be detrimental to highway safety without improvements being made to the junction of the farm access onto the A342.

## **9. Planning Considerations**

### **Background**

The applicant claims that his farm has diversified into various commercial enterprises over the last twenty years. The current planning application relates to one of those enterprises. In essence, the applicant has entered into an arrangement with an agency which finances the purchase of commercial vehicles, plant and machinery, to collect, repair and/or recondition such items where the company is unable to meet its contractual obligations with the finance company. Once the items have been cleaned and repaired, they are sold to defray the outstanding financial obligations between the parties to the original agreement.

According to the applicant, until the end of 2007 the number of vehicles and items of plant being brought onto the farm was not significant and the business operated alongside the other agricultural and commercial activities run from the site. Since then the severe economic recession has resulted in a significant increase in the number of repossessions, and a collapse in the demand for commercial vehicles, plant and equipment. This has resulted in a marked increase in the number of vehicles, etc. that are stored or parked in and around the farm buildings. The applicant therefore decided to construct an additional area of hardstanding for use in connection with the business. An earth bund has been constructed around the north and east edges of the hardstanding.

### **Assessment**

Government guidance contained in PPS4 advises local planning authorities to support farm diversification initiatives which are consistent in scale and environmental impact with their rural location.

The main impacts of this development are upon visual amenity and landscape character, highway safety and neighbour amenity.

#### **a) Impact upon visual amenity and landscape character**

The vehicles, plant and machinery are stored on a new hardstanding to the north of the existing farm buildings. The position of the hardstanding means that the development is hidden in views from the south. The main visual impact is from the north and there are clear views from the A342 near its junction with the A3102. The most significant views are from the A342 from the junction with the Calne Road (B3102) southwards.

The nature of the storage, which includes amongst other things brightly coloured lorry units, articulated trailers and earthmoving plant with jibs, means that it is highly visible as a discordant element in the rural landscape. In essence, it is what you would expect on an industrial estate in a built up area, not a farmyard in the countryside. The existing bunding is inadequate to screen the external storage effectively and higher bunding would be impractical and appear alien in this location. The applicant has put in a landscaping scheme and it would be possible to plant the boundaries with trees and hedging (as proposed in the scheme), but your officers are concerned that this would be inadequate as the commercial vehicles are bulky and taller than the normal hedgerows and planting that could be expected in this location. Any planting would take a considerable length of time to establish and become effective, plus native species would not provide the necessary screening in the winter months. I.

The proposed junction improvements would also have a visual impact. However, it is considered that this is capable of being mitigated by a suitable landscaping scheme incorporating native trees and hedging.

**b) Impact upon highway safety**

The application proposes improvements to the junction of the access road with the A342. These improvements are necessary to improve the junction radii and make it suitable for the large, often articulated, vehicles accessing the site. It will also have added benefits for farm traffic and the residents of neighbouring properties. The Council's highway engineer is satisfied that the improvements are acceptable from a highway safety perspective. There are thus no objections on these grounds.

**c) Impact upon neighbour amenity**

The movement of heavy vehicles and plant in and out of the site has the potential to cause nuisance for the occupiers of residential properties alongside the access. However, the number of daily movements is likely to be relatively modest, particularly in comparison to the existing levels of farm traffic using the access. The realignment of the junction will move the access road further away from Roughmoor Cottages and this will reduce any impact upon the amenities of occupiers of these properties. It is relevant to note that no objections on these grounds have been received from adjacent properties; three have made representations but none has raised any objection on amenity grounds.

**d) Economic benefits**

PPS 4 supports economic development in rural areas, but makes it clear that planning authorities need to consider whether the benefits outweigh the harm in terms of the potential impact on the countryside and landscape compared to the local economic and social needs.

**Conclusion**

As other matters are not at issue, the assessment of this application focuses on whether the benefits of the economic diversification outweigh the harm to the appearance of the countryside and landscape at the site. This is a finely balanced issue and had the use involved smaller scale vehicles, such as tractors, officers may have been able to support it. However, the size and nature of the vehicles involved make the operation one that is more appropriately sited on a properly serviced industrial estate. The impact of this open storage on the appearance of the countryside is considered unacceptable and accordingly, refusal is recommended.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Refuse planning permission for the following reason:

The open storage of vehicles, plant and machinery is detrimental to visual amenity and landscape character due to its location adjacent to open countryside, height and bright coloration. This is contrary to policies PD1 & NR7 of the Kennet Local Plan 2011, Supplementary Planning Guidance contained in the Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy and government policy contained in PPS4: 'Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth'.

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:**

The application file and associated history file.