

Report to the Southern Area Planning Committee

Date of Meeting	17 October 2013		
Application Number	13/00246/FUL		
Site Address	Croucheston Farm, The Cross, Bishopstone, Salisbury, Wiltshire. SP5 4BW		
Proposal	The proposals aim to recreate and manage flood plains habitats which involve de-silting and re-connecting of the feeder ditch from the river Ebble. This in turn will be connected to a series of shallow scrapes and small area of permanent water via a new narrow channel which will return to the river Ebble via an existing drop board sluice arrangement. The rear access drive to the farm will also be resurfaced in bitmac		
Applicant	Lady Nadine Cobham		
Town/Parish Council	Bishopstone		
Electoral Division	Fovant and Chalke Valley	Unitary Member	Cllr Jose Green
Grid Ref	406876 125524		
Type of application	Full Planning		
Case Officer	Ben Hatt		

Reason for the application being considered by Members

The application has been called to committee by Councillor Jose Green over the issues of

- Scale of development
- Relationship to adjoining properties
- Environmental impact

1. Purpose of report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission be **GRANTED subject to conditions**.

2. Report Summary

- Planning considerations
- Impact on surrounding area including the river system
- Highways
- Ecology
- Archaeology

3. Site Description

The wetlands are located within Croucheston Farm within the rural settlement of Bishopstone. To the north of the Wetlands is the river Ebble, and neighbouring residential properties. To the south west of the Wetlands is the existing farm complex.

4. Planning History

S/2008/0940 2 STOREY REAR EXTENSION

S/2010/1216 DEMOLITION OF SINGLE STOREY WING AND ERECTION OF REPLACEMENT WING AND INTERNAL ALTERATIONS

S/2004/2134 TO FORM PRIVATE RIGHT OF WAY

IN/2012/22497 Proposed reinstatement of floodplain with introduction of small ponds and reedbeds.

5. The Proposal

The proposals aim to recreate and manage flood plains habitats which involve desilting and re connecting of the feeder ditch from the river Ebble. This in turn will be connected to a series of shallow scrapes and small area of permanent water via a new narrow channel which will return to the river Ebble via an existing drop board sluice arrangement. The rear access drive to the farm will also be resurfaced in bitmac

6. Planning Policy

G1, G2, C1, C2, C4, C5, C12, C13, C14, C17, C18

CP22

NPFF

7. Consultations

Environment Agency

No objections subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Ecology

No objections subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Highways

No objection

Wiltshire Council Archaeology

No objections subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Conservation

No objections

AONB Group

Questions viability of the scheme

Parish Council

No objections have been received in principle and the improvements to the wetlands have been welcomed. Concerns have been raised over significant impacts negative impacts on the main River Ebble and its environment, and on the interests of other riparian landowners in the village. Concerns have also been raised over the extraction limit of 20 cubic metres and how it would be measured or enforced. The comments go on to state that the application cannot be approved with the level of information supplied insufficient. The scheme and its impact have not been addressed.

Following amended plans and additional information an additional response was received. Concerns are again raised over the level of information and the questions that remain unanswered. The issue regarding the water levels serving the wetlands and if they are achievable is raised as no information showing it can be achieved has been submitted. The Parish Council also remain unconvinced that the use proposed is different from the agricultural grazing it is currently used as. An objection over the re surfacing of the adjoining track is also raised.

13 letters of representation raising concerns over an increase in traffic along High Road and Harvest Lane including an increase in Tractors vans and lorries, and impact on the river system and wetlands as a result of the amount of water required to ensure the scheme is successful. A representation received questions the conclusion that the scheme is viable.

1 letter of support. Stating application has been well prepared and has taken into account the surrounding area. The drainage system will reduced standing water and aid its return to the river.

8. Publicity

Site notice posted 15/5/13

Site visit conducted 15/5/13

9. Planning Considerations

The application consists of 6 proposals with the proposed timber decking removed from the application, which make up an overall scheme. The first proposal is the creation of a series of wetland scrapes and larger areas of open water linked by reconnecting the existing channel to the River Ebble via a drop board sluice system. The second proposal is the desilting of the side channel from the main river to the site. The third proposal is the removal of the topsoil off site. The planting of marginal and submerged aquatic species including reed beds, native tree and shrub planting within specific areas, and the surfacing of an existing gravel track with tarmac make up the final 3 proposals of the scheme. The following paragraphs will assess the scheme in more detail.

9.1 Impact on surrounding area including river system

The proposed works which seek to create a series of wetland scrapes which are connected to the River Ebble will require a constant water flow in order to serve the surrounding wetland and associated ecology. Objections from the Parish Council and a number of local residents have been received regarding the viability of the scheme and its impact on the adjoining river system. Whilst no objections have been received from the

Environment Agency it has been questioned that the features being created may not be supported and sustained by the current water flow including permissible water extraction (up to 20 cubic metres a day) and that additional water may be required which would result in the need for an abstraction licence that is unlikely to be granted. In addition to this it is stated that any additional water extraction would require sluice management outside of the control of the applicants.

Additional information submitted from the applicants has stated that the scheme is viable within its own right and notwithstanding a number of objections received including one objection based around engineering calculations. It is accepted that the proposed ponds will be connected by a deep ditch which will flow intermittently throughout the year. This will alleviate the issues of ponding and fish being stranded in the summer. Therefore It is considered that whilst there is The Environment Agency has recommended a number of conditions which will ensure that the proposal does not have a detrimental impact on the existing habitat and wetland features.

9.2 Highways

A number of concerns have been raised regarding the tarmac access drive. The proposal would see the existing access track be tarmaced. This will allow improved access to the rear of the farm complex. Concerns have been raised over an increased traffic flow through Harvest Lane and whether the bridges in the locality can support the farm vehicles. The re surfacing of an existing access will allow a improved service to the rear of the complex for vehicles using the site. It is considered that the resurfacing will not result in a significant increase in traffic using the site. In addition to this the type of vehicles using the access to the farm will remain the same as no change of use is proposed as part of the application. Furthermore no objections have been received from Highways.

9.3 Ecology

Details including a phase 1 habitat survey have been submitted as part of the application. It is considered that the proposals make the most of the existing ecological interest and subject to conditions no objection has been raised from the County Ecologist.

9.4 Archaeology

An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has been submitted. Within this assessment it is accepted that the proposal could have an impact on the existing archaeology on the site. The assessment states that due to the waterlogged nature of the site preservation of any archaeological remains are likely to be good with the re establishment of a managed wetland environment may aid the long term preservation of any waterlogged deposits. Whilst a recommendation for further investigations has been made from the county archaeologist no objections have been raised it is considered that any additional investigations can be dealt with through condition.

10. Conclusion

The proposed wetland management scheme will result in a link with the adjoining river system and will require a management scheme to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the existing wetland or adjoining river system.

The proposed scheme would cause no damage to the surrounding area or ecology and whilst questions have been raised over the viability of the scheme it is considered that on balance it is acceptable with the benefits outweighing any potential negative impacts.

Recommendation

Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. There shall be no depositing of material within the floodplain or other raising of ground levels.

REASON To ensure the integrity of the floodplain.

3. A further vegetation and (protected) species survey, carried out in spring/summer, to inform the design and method statement to minimise ecological impact and maximise ecological gain. It is not possible in winter to detect many ecological features or interests, and any further recommendations from such surveys incorporated should be incorporated into works. Although it is stated that an ecological clerk of works will be employed, it is not enough to rely on mitigation at the time of work - avoidance should be demonstrated in preference. A benefit of this for example, is that any valuable wetland vegetation could be kept wet throughout construction and replaced in a wet location (which will also aid later planting).

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

4. It is known locally that Himalayan balsam is present upstream of the road bridge (2010 local records), and the wet winter in 2012/13 may have resulted in downstream deposition. Therefore an invasive non-native species survey, and subsequent avoidance/appropriate control action to avoid spread, should take place before construction, as well as consideration in soil movement and the long term habitat management plan.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

5. We would like to see a selection of cross-sections allowing for: shallow, gently inclining edges, graded to marshy areas that are suitable for a wide range of invertebrates and vegetation; a range of depths to provide a varied profile and refuge; irregular pond margins to increase "edge" length and orientation.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

6. We would also like to see the planting plans. Only native wetland plants should be used. In addition, planting is not always required and we would encourage a certain amount of natural colonisation to allow the local seed bank to regenerate. (We have not visited the site and are unaware if planting has been carried out to date. Even if so, we still advise native only, due to the dispersion potential of wetlands).

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

7. We would also like to see at least 50% of the shrub planting situated on the southern edge of the channel course to provide summer shading and water cooling to the wetland area.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

8. We ask for any dead wood to be left on site.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

9. The buffer between the decking posts and the pond edge must be increased from 1m to at least 3m to allow a continuous corridor of wetland vegetation without shading/disturbance.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

10. We would also like to have the opportunity to comment on the long term habitat management plan and any grazing/fencing proposals. A low density grazing regime, without watercourse fencing, is preferred.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

11. It's possible that the decking would disturb wetland wildlife, given it is approximately 50% of the size of the individual reed-bed plots. It would be preferable if the decking could be reduced in size, as well as the buffer increased (as discussed above).

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

12. Whilst the creation of additional wetland habitat is welcomed it should not be carried out at the expense of the existing aquatic system, therefore the development should utilise the existing water it receives from the River Ebbles. If the plans proceed as submitted then we would like to see anticipated environmental impacts (biodiversity and fisheries) on the loss of flow from the "deprived reach".

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

13. The inlet and outlet boards must be designed to enable fish to migrate over them when water conditions allow. This can be achieved by cutting a V notch into the top board (a minimum of 10cms deep with 45° sides) and rounding the board's edges that will have water flowing over them.

REASON: In the interest of the natural environment

14. Prior to the commencement of development an Ecological Management Plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the LPA. The Plan should cover:

1. Existing situation

Phase 1 habitat map (based on summer survey)

Locations of native and non native tree planting in the floodplain

(based on site survey)

2. Proposed scheme

Location of ponds (demonstrating where adjustments are needed to avoid areas of existing ecological interest being affected by new ponds)

Revised planting schedule (to demonstrate that areas of existing marshy grassland will be avoided by planting, and that all planting in the flood plain will be of native species)

Sources of native stock for tree and aquatic planting

3. Management of site

Water bodies

Grassland

REASON: In the interests of onsite ecology

14. No development shall commence within the area indicated (proposed development site) until:

a) A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and

b) The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

The work should be conducted by a professional archaeological contractor in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed by this office. There will be a financial implication for the applicant.

REASON:

To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest.