
APPLICATION NO.	P08/E1230
APPLICATION TYPE	Full
REGISTERED	10 th November 2008
PARISH	Watlington
WARD MEMBERS	Rev'd Angie Paterson Mr Rodney Mann
APPLICANT	Mr A Ferreira
SITE	Oak Tree Farm, Christmas Common
PROPOSALS	New access to include five bar wooden gate and hardstanding driveway
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	471961/193101
OFFICER	Tom Wyatt

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer's recommendations conflict with the views of the Town Council.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) is located in a relatively isolated location in the countryside some 500 metres to the east of the main built up area of the small and loose-knit settlement of Christmas Common. The site is within the Chilterns AONB.
- 1.3 The proposal relates to a parcel of land totalling approximately 2 hectares in area, which is at present undeveloped agricultural grazing land. It is understood the applicant wishes to use the land for the purposes of an organic poultry farm. Indeed two previous applications for various buildings on the site associated with the proposed poultry unit were refused, primarily due to the impact on the landscape qualities of the Chilterns AONB. The previous application, P08/E0527/RET, also sought permission for the retention of the existing access into the land from the adjacent highway. This element of the application was refused for the following reason:

The visibility at the proposed access fails to meet the standards required by the Local Highway Authority. Therefore, vehicles using the proposed access will enter the public highway without the required visibility splays, which would be detrimental to highway safety. As such the proposal fails to comply with Policy T8 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and Policy T1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

- 1.4 This access is still in existence. However, due to the above refusal reason, the applicant acknowledges that a new access point is required to address the highway safety issues.

2.0 **THE PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 Firstly it is important to note that this application does not include any proposals for buildings or other operational development within the site apart from the proposed access and associated works. The proposed access would be approximately 40 metres to the west of the existing sub-standard access and has been moved to improve visibility to the east. The proposed access would be similar to the existing access in terms of the use of a five bar wooden gate set back from the highway. Also

included within the application is provision for hardstanding at the access point. The existing access would be stopped up should permission be granted, but would need to be removed in any case due to its sub-standard nature and the fact that a retrospective planning application has been refused.

2.2 A copy of the plans and supporting letter accompanying the application are **attached** as Appendix B.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Watlington Parish Council** – Objects due to inappropriate surfacing to a field access, damage to vegetation and unnecessary removal of part of a hedge.

3.2 **OCC Highway Liaison Officer** – No objections subject to conditions.

3.3 **Countryside Officer (Ecology)** – A condition should be placed on any permission requiring that the existing access is stopped up by the planting of a new native hedgerow within 8 months of the formation of the new access.

3.4 **Neighbours** – Six letters of objection have been received raising the following concerns:

- the existing access is sufficient
- the access may be the first stage in achieving additional development on the site
- harm to the AONB

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P08/E0527/RET - Siting of mobile homes to provide temporary farm workers' dwelling and hatcherie, 4 hen houses, 2 brooder houses, and 2 storage sheds. New access point to include retrospective gate. Creation of pond. Refusal of Planning Permission on 3rd July 2008.

4.2 P07/E1560 - Siting of mobile homes to provide temporary farm workers' dwelling and hatcherie, 4 hen houses, 2 brooder houses, 2 storage sheds, and construction of new access and hardstanding. Refusal of planning permission on 13th March 2008.

5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:

- G1, G2, G5, G6, T1, T2, T8, EN1

5.2 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):

- G1, G2, G6, C1, C2, C8, C9, D1, T1, T2

5.3 Government Guidance:

- PPS1, PPS3, PPS7

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 (SODG)
- South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment

6.0 **PLANNING ISSUES**

- 6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are:
1. The impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
 2. Highway considerations
 3. Ecology and landscape considerations

The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Site and Surrounding Area

- 6.2 The proposal is for a new access some 15 metres wide at its junction with the adjacent highway. A five bar gate of 4 metres in width would be installed within the existing field boundary some 6 metres back from the edge of the highway. The existing access to the land is not acceptable in highway safety terms and there is no other access from the highway onto the land. The applicant does not own any adjoining land from where access can be gained.
- 6.3 It is reasonable that there should be an access point from the highway onto the land, and the proposed access would consist of an area of hardstanding and a five bar gate. The design and appearance of the gate is appropriate to the rural character and appearance of the site and surroundings, and the landscape qualities of the Chilterns AONB. The proposed hardstanding is a necessary consequence of the access in terms of providing a generally level and stable surface for vehicles.
- 6.4 The applicant wishes to use the land for an organic poultry unit, which is an agricultural use that does not require planning permission in its own right. However, various permanent buildings associated with such a use would, in all likelihood, require permission and such development has previously been found to be unacceptable having regard to the refusals of application P07/1560 and P08/E0527/RET. Any planning applications for buildings or other operational development on the site would be assessed on their own merits. Similarly this current application is only for the access and concerns regarding future development on the site cannot be considered at this stage.

Highway Considerations

- 6.5 The existing access is substandard in terms of visibility along the highway to the right when exiting. The proposed access point would provide the necessary visibility splays and would result in an improvement in terms of highway safety. As such the proposal complies with Policy T1 of the SOLP.

Ecology and Landscape Considerations

- 6.6 The proposed access would affect an existing hedgerow along the front boundary of the site. The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) would apply to this hedgerow. Under the regulations the creation of a new access point is permitted under Section 6.(1)(a) provided the existing opening is filled by planting a new hedge.
- 6.7 The Countryside Officer has recommended that a condition is placed on the permission requiring that the existing access point is stopped up by the planting of a new hedgerow within 8 months of the creation of the new access point. The new hedgerow should be planted with native and locally appropriate hedgerow species. Providing that the existing access is stopped up and suitably landscaped the impact of the proposed new access on the existing hedgerow and wider landscape will be effectively mitigated.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal is in accordance with the relevant development plan policies and national planning policy, as, subject to conditions, the proposal would not cause any significant harm to the character and appearance of the site or the landscape qualities of the Chilterns, and would not be prejudicial to highway safety.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 **That planning permission be granted, subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. Commencement 3 years**
- 2. Existing access to be stopped up within 3 months of the creation of the approved access by way of a planting scheme to be submitted and approved prior to commencement**
- 3. Highway conditions**

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