



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

TO: Planning Committee (South)
BY: Development Manager
DATE: 20 December 2016
DEVELOPMENT: Erection of Polytunnel and Storage Building for Agricultural Aquaponics Use
SITE: Calcot Farm, Horsham Road, Steyning
WARD: Steyning
APPLICATION: DC/16/2016
APPLICANT: Mr Richard Jesse

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: Called in by Cllr Willett

RECOMMENDATION: To Grant Planning Permission

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

- 1.2 The proposal concerns the erection of a polytunnel and associated storage building on land north of the existing dairy farm buildings, for purposes of aquaponics. The proposed polytunnel would measure some 5.4m x 12m with an overall height of 3.6m set about 2m to the north of the accompanying storage building. The storage building would be some 2.5m x 6m with a height of 2.5m and clad in timber with a metal flat profile roof.
- 1.3 The term 'aquaponics' is a combination farming technique using aquaculture (raising fish in a tank) and hydroponics (cultivating plants in water) in a symbiotic environment. A tank containing trout would be set to one end of the polytunnel and water from the fish tank would circulate through a series of gravel beds and back into the fish tank. The associated gravel beds are therefore used to raise wasabi, a root vegetable, which is grown in running water using the by-products from the fish as nutrients. The water is then re-circulated through the fish tank in a continuous cycle.
- 1.4 The adjacent storage building would house the pumps, electrical circuit breaker, fish food and other maintenance products and equipment necessary for the aquaponics system.

ITEM A07 - 2

- 1.5 The proposal is part of the farm diversification program in order to support the main farming activity on the site. Aquaponics is a new approach to farming which does not require large tracts of land or investment.
- 1.6 The fish would be harvested at 12-18 months of age, at the same time as the wasabi, which would be sold locally with no preparation at the source. The anticipated vehicular movements will not materially increase over and above the wider farming activities on the site, and the trout and wasabi would be attended to daily by the staff working on the main farm.
- 1.7 To address a number of concerns raised by neighbour representations, the following information has been submitted:
- No internal or external lighting is required
 - An electrical supply will run underground from adjacent farm buildings to the storage building where a 12volt 'leisure' battery will be housed. There is no proposal to include a back-up generator but back-up batteries will be stored within the storage building
 - The aquaponics facility will include a submersible pump sited within the fish tank, which will not create any noise
 - No cooling or heating systems are proposed
 - No waste water will be created in the normal cycle of the aquaponics system. In the event of the tank needing to be emptied, then a disposal firm would be employed
 - Disposal of dead fish would be through a company 'Hawkins', Cowfold
 - Plant waste would be minimal and would be composted on site with farmyard manure, already stored on site and subsequently spread as fertiliser on the farmlands

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 1.8 The site is located within open countryside on the western side of Horsham Road, between Ashurst and Steyning. The wider farm has access off Horsham Road via a private track which is not solely owned by the applicant, and is in shared use with the adjoining residential property at Calcot Bungalow.

Additional vehicular access to the current application site is via a track that leads from the shared access with Calcot Bungalow, some 10m before the residential curtilage begins.

- 1.9 The site forms part of a larger farming enterprise which is owned by a partnership of brothers who farm across three sites, Calcot Farm, New Wharf Farm and Northover Farm. The application site is located to the north of Calcot farm and lies adjacent to a number of existing agricultural buildings, including WC facilities.
- 1.10 The partnership owns 300 acres and rents a further 150 acres adjoining New Wharf Farm and along Spithandle Lane, all within half a mile of the farm. There are 200 milking cows, 120 heifers and 20 bull calves at New Wharf Farm. There are 40 dry cows and 120 heifers at Calcot Farm, which is also used for the storage of straw feed and machinery.
- 1.11 Aside from the nearest residential property at Calcot Bungalow, which is some 85m south-east of the application site, there are further dwellings some 100m to the north of the application site, although the curtilage of 1 Horsebridge Cottage lies some 20m from the application site, and is defined by a dense line of vegetation and trees.
- 1.12 It is noted that two buildings have recently been permitted on land adjacent to the proposed aquaponics site, comprising an agricultural storage building granted under Prior Notification

ITEM A07 - 3

(DC/16/1129) to the west, and a log storage yard (DC/15/2142) to the south. It is envisaged that the agricultural barn will be erected during Autumn / Winter 2016, whilst the log yard is already in use and subject to planning conditions covering hours of vehicular activity and deliveries, use of power tools, burning of materials and external illumination

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

NPPF1 - Building a strong, competitive economy

NPPF4 - Promoting sustainable transport

NPPF7 - Requiring good design

NPPF11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICY

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015)

HDPF1 – Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development

HDPF2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development

HDPF10 – Rural Economic Development

HDPF24 – Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection

HDPF25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

HDPF26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection

HDPF32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development

HDPF33 - Development Principles

HDPF40 - Sustainable Transport

HDPF41 - Parking

RELEVANT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Steyning Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan area has been designated in September 2014.

PLANNING HISTORY

ST/44/01	Prior notification to extend farmyard hardstanding & track	PER
ST/138/02	Track,hardstanding and infilling of slope to provide even gradient to field	PER
DC/10/0775	Erection of 2 buildings to partially replace a building totally destroyed by fire (Prior Notification)	PAR
DC/10/1256	Formation of farm track (Agricultural Prior Notification)	PANR

ITEM A07 - 4

DC/11/0844	Proposed installation of 10 solar PV panels on detached barn roof (Full Planning)	REF
DC/11/0846	Proposed installation of 10 solar pv panels on detached barn roof (Listed Building Consent)	REF
DC/14/1920	Change of use of old dairy and milking parlour to 2 x B1/B8 units and regularisation of partial change of use of barn to provide 5 x storage units as part of the farm diversification scheme	PER
DC/14/1921	Change of use of land to provide a storage area for building materials measuring 10m by 18m with associated soft landscaping	WDN
DC/15/2142	Retrospective application for the change of use of land from farm yard to storage of logs, woodchip and mulch	PER
DC/15/2258	Prior notification for a proposed farm track to increase accessibility for farm animals and farm machinery	PER
DC/16/1129	Prior notification for a agricultural barn	PER

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

The following section provides a summary of the responses received as a result of internal and external consultation, however, officers have considered the full comments of each consultee which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

3.1 **West Sussex Highways** - No Objection

- Proposed new wasabi and trout farming enterprise will run alongside existing dairy operations with an existing site access used and existing staff on site tending the fish and plants
- Initial set up will require some deliveries, and every 12-8 months wasabi plants and trout will be 'harvested' and distributed from the site.
- Details regarding the length of time and number vehicle trips associated with the initial set up should be submitted, along with details on estimated vehicle trips anticipated with each new cycle
- However it is not considered these trips once a year will be detrimental to highway safety or capacity.

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

3.2 **Environmental Health** - No objection

- It is advised that the same operational conditions are imposed as per the adjacent log store
- A waste management plan should also be subject to a planning condition

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.3 **Parish Council Consultation** - Objection

- Councillors are concerned that the access is unsuitable and requires Highway Authority inspection.
- It is also believed that the map of the drive is incorrect and should be investigated.
- There is a lack of information on the powered equipment such as lighting, pump, generators etc. that will be required to be able to run the proposed business.
- There are no details for toilets or water facilities.
- There is no information on how waste water will be dealt with and councillors would like to see confirmation from the Environment Agency that the business complies with all regulations.
- There will be a visual impact and noise nuisance from machinery to neighbours.
- If the application is permitted there councillors feel the hours of business should be restricted to ensure that vehicles and other activities are not carried out overnight, late evening and early morning.
-

3.4 **Public Consultations** - Letters of representation have been received from 2 neighbouring residential properties.

The following objections are raised:

- Garden boundary to Horsebridge Cottages just 12m from the application site – close proximity between polytunnel and residential boundary
- Concerned that proposal would lead to a loss of amenity and privacy to family property and survival of business as a baking school, teabarn and holiday cottages
- Increased visibility owing to raised site levels
- How could proposal be viable without lighting, filtration, cooling systems which would require a power system and back-up generator – leading to significant noise and loss of amenity
- Oxygenated water is important to fish or they die – recent power cuts so back-up generator required
- Requirement to discharge polluted water if fish become ill / diseased – how would this be disposed of? Proximity to a stream within 20m
- Current hours of use restriction on site, so proposed aquaponics use would exceed this as it would require constant 24hour / 365day operation
- Proposed intensive 500-fish commercial activity
- No waste water drainage plan, no Klargester shown
- Noise from electric pump
- Misleading plans, missing information and highway safety issues with existing access to the site
- No information on required health and hygiene requirements such as WC or washing facilities
- Insufficient site screening from late autumn to spring – during leaf fall
- Forecast traffic generation does not take account of deliveries of fish food or other necessities

4. **HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS**

ITEM A07 - 6

- 4.1 Article 8 (Right to respect of a Private and Family Life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of Property) of the Human Rights Act 1998 are relevant to this application, Consideration of Human rights forms part of the planning assessment below.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

- 5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

- 6.1 The site is located in open countryside, but close to an existing group of farm buildings, with the agricultural use established on the dairy farm for many years. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) 2015 states that outside built-up-area boundaries, development will not be permitted unless it is considered essential to its countryside location and in addition meets one of the following criteria:
- a) Supports the needs of agriculture or forestry;
 - b) Enables the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
 - c) Provides for quiet informal recreational use; or
 - d) Ensures the sustainable development of rural areas.
- 6.2 In this instance, it is clear that the proposal would meet the above criteria in supporting the needs of agriculture, and it has therefore been adequately demonstrated that the proposal is essential to its countryside location.
- 6.3 Furthermore, Para.28 of the NPPF states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To achieve this, Local Authorities are encouraged to support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses and enterprises within rural areas and promote development and diversification of agriculture and other land-based rural businesses.
- 6.4 The application has been submitted as part of a farm diversification scheme to support the existing farm business. Policy10, Rural Economic Development, of the HDPF states that proposals for new rural enterprises within established agricultural holdings will be permitted if they contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the district or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside; and either
- a. Be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries of the estate; or
 - b. Result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved. New buildings or development in the rural area will be acceptable provided that it supports sustainable economic growth towards balanced living and working communities and criteria a) has been considered first.
- 6.5 In this instance, it is noted that there are no existing suitable buildings for the proposed aquaponics farming operations, given its specific requirements. The proposed polytunnel and associated storage building would therefore be considered to maintain the quality and character of the area and therefore appropriate to the countryside location.

Amenity of adjoining properties

- 6.6 Policy 33 of the HDPF seeks to avoid unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity. The wider site has been a working dairy farm for a number of years and with this, there are an associated number of the buildings on the site to support the farming activities, including barns and storage buildings. The existing buildings are located in close proximity to each other with pasture lands and yards surrounding the site. Farm diversification within the existing buildings is already noted, with a meat cutting room and a couple of buildings which have B1/B8 use. In addition to these, there is a log storage yard adjacent to the application site, which is also in support of the wider farm diversification. This log storage yard is subject to planning conditions relating to hours of vehicular movements and use of power tools, in order to reduce any potential harmful neighbour impact by way of adverse noise or disturbance.
- 6.7 It would appear that the land on which the proposed development is to be sited, has recently been used for the wider agricultural storage of wrapped silage bales and other farming equipment, which is not subject to any such restrictions. It is also noted that an agricultural storage barn, some 8m to ridge and 24m in length, has been approved under agricultural prior notification earlier in 2016 (DC/16/1129) some 15m to the west of the current application site.
- 6.8 In comparison with the barn approved under DC/16/1129, the north-facing end elevation of the proposed polytunnel, facing the residential boundary with Horsebridge Cottages, would be some 3.6m in height and some 5.4m in width with a curved roof profile. There is a separation distance of some 25m between the proposed polytunnel and the neighbouring residential boundary and as such, it is not considered that the location and height of the proposed polytunnel would lead to any adverse loss of light or outlook to the neighbouring residential dwelling. Given the nature of the proposed development it is similarly not considered that this would lead to any adverse impact on residential amenity in terms of use, given the wider agricultural use of the site.
- 6.9 Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the potential views from this neighbouring property through the boundary vegetation would be increased during winter months when leaf coverage is reduced, however it would be at such distances and over an established farm site, that no adverse and detrimental harm is judged to occur as a result of the proposed polytunnel. The associated businesses at Horsebridge Cottages of the tea-room, bakehouse and holiday cottages are noted, but these form part of the overall agricultural character of the area, and no adverse harm to the businesses are considered to occur as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.10 It is considered, given the scale and low level of activity which would be closely linked to the farm and the existing activity on the site, that the proposed use would not cause significant detrimental impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents through noise and disturbance.

Parking and highway safety

- 6.11 The access for the site is currently used in connection with the existing farm building, and avoids passing the neighbouring dwelling of Calcot Bungalow.
- 6.12 Objections have been received in relation to highway safety. Previous applications on this site have been acknowledged as utilising an existing access to the highway which is used in association with an intensive farming operation. It is considered that the proposal would

ITEM A07 - 8

not be anticipated to give rise to any further and significant intensification of use of the site or the access compared with what has previously occurred in association with the on-going dairy farming use of the site and ancillary operations.

- 6.13 The Local Highways Authority has assessed the proposal and considers that the traffic impact as a result of the new business venture would be minimal, as it would be in support of the existing dairy farm operating out of the site, using an existing vehicular access and tended by existing farm staff. It is understood that there would be a reasonably low number of vehicular trips associated with the initial set-up and some trips every 12-18 months when the wasabi and trout are harvested. The applicant has provided additional details, anticipating that the initial set-up would require 3-4 vehicles in total, although unlikely to be all on one day, with some 2-3 vehicular trips associated over a 12-month period to deliver / collect the produce.
- 6.14 These forecast numbers are relatively low, considering the existing nature of the dairy farm, other authorised activities at the site and the residential dwelling, and therefore, they are not anticipated to lead to any detrimental impact on highway safety or capacity.

Conclusion

- 6.15 In conclusion, the proposal has been considered within the context of the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and against Local Policies set out within the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), which includes the provision for appropriate rural economic development.
- 6.16 Officers consider that the proposal would lead to an acceptable form of development and would not lead to material harm in terms of its impact on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties and the character of the surrounding area.

7. Recommendation: Application Approved

- 1 Approved plans list
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 3 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be first brought into use until the vehicle parking and turning spaces have been constructed in accordance with the approved plan. These spaces shall thereafter be retained for their designated use.

Reason: To provide adequate on-site car parking and turning space for the development and in accordance with Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham Development Planning Framework (2015).

4. There shall be no delivery or dispatch occurring at the site between the hours of:-

ITEM A07 - 9

08:00 and 18:00 on Mondays to Saturdays,
and at no time of Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham Development Planning Framework (2015)

5. No external plant (including refrigeration motors, extract ventilation/air conditioning systems, etc) shall be installed unless details are provided to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their installation. The plant shall thereafter be installed and be maintained in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham Development Planning Framework (2015)

6. No external lighting or floodlighting shall be installed without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Any that is installed with the permission of the Local Planning Authority shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham Development Planning Framework (2015)

7. Prior to first use, a scheme for the disposal of waste has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The waste management scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the agreed details.

The following details should be included:

- Methods and frequency of tank cleaning
- Storage, collection and disposal methods of any waste, debris or animal matter
- Location of the waste storage (compost heaps). It is expected that these should be located no closer than 30m from any neighbouring residential boundaries.
- No burning of materials on site, including aquaponics waste.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham Development Planning Framework (2015)

INFORMATIVES

NOTE TO APPLICANT

Statement pursuant to Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Background Papers: DC/16/2026