

Development Control Committee

Meeting to be held on 10th December 2014

Electoral Division affected: Fylde West
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Fylde Borough: Application Number LCC/2014/0126

Change of use of agricultural land and woodland to extend the depot by 25 metres to the west of the existing site boundaries, additional landscaping and relocation of 2.4m high palisade boundary fencing. LCC Highways Depot, Grange Road, Singleton.

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

Application – Change of use of agricultural land and woodland to extend the depot by 25 metres to the west of the existing site boundaries, additional landscaping and relocation of 2.4m high palisade boundary fencing. LCC Highways Depot, Grange Road, Singleton.

Recommendation – Summary

That planning permission be **granted** subject to conditions controlling time limits, working programme, wheel cleaning facilities, landscaping, safeguarding of water courses, groundwater and drainage, floodlighting and building materials.

Applicant's Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of agricultural land and woodland to be used for an external storage and vehicle parking area in association with the adjacent LCC Singleton Highways Depot.

The proposal would extend the highways depot by a distance of 25m from the existing western boundary. The surface would be surfaced with crushed stone and laid to a nominal fall towards the site's existing land drains. A 4m wide landscaping strip to consist of a 0.5m high raised area of soil to be planted with trees would be located along the western and southern boundaries of the extended area so as to screen the site. The existing 2.4m high palisade fencing along the south and west boundaries of the existing site would be removed and relocated to enclose the extended area.

An area of woodland to the south of the existing depot is also included within the application site and would be subject to additional tree planting to increase the screening value of the existing woodland.

Description and Location of Site

Singleton Depot is an existing highway maintenance depot located at the junction of Grange Road and the A585 Fleetwood Road, approximately 2 km north east of Singleton. The depot has an area of 0.73 hectares and is located within open countryside and is accessed from Grange Road to the north. A line of trees is located inside the eastern boundary with the A585 beyond, to the south is a woodland known as Fisher's Slack Wood and to the west is agricultural land. The nearest residential properties from the proposed extended area are 250m to the north, 140m to the east and 950m to the west at Grange near Singleton. An access to a specialist glass-manufacturing unit in former farm buildings is located on the opposite side of Grange Road to the depot.

The area of the depot nearest Grange Road (approximately one third of the site) is served by a separate access. It comprises a tarmaced surface with a brick office building and a mobile office unit in the northern corner of the site, together with associated car parking. The remaining two thirds of the depot is used for the storage of materials and equipment associated with highway maintenance and is served by a separate access from Grange Road along the western boundary of the depot. The depot is bound by 2.4m high palisade fencing and an area of the compound at the southern end is currently formed by open bays used for the storage of road salt.

Background

The development is located at an existing highways depot. The following planning history is relevant.

Planning permission for the siting of a temporary demountable office building, erection of a single storey office building and link to existing offices and the retention of a revised HGV access to depot was granted in August 2006 (ref. 05/06/0510).

Planning permission for the erection of a vehicle storage facility on the site of an existing storage/parking area was granted in May 2009 (ref. 05/09/0116).

Planning permission for the variation of Condition 2 of permission 05/06/0510 to allow retention of the single storey demountable unit for a further 3 years was granted in October 2010 (ref. 05/10/0589).

Planning permission for the retention of a temporary office unit and external ramps and guard rails was granted in September 2014 (ref. LCC/2014/0099).

A planning application for the a new salt dome to store rock salt, extensions to existing vehicle storage units to create four new garage units and additional landscaping is reported elsewhere on this agenda (ref. LCC/2014/0104).

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraphs 11 – 14, 17, 28, 56 – 66, 109, 112, 118, 122 and 125 are relevant with regard to the requirement for sustainable development, core planning principles,

supporting a prosperous rural economy, the requirement for good design and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

National Planning Practice Guidance

Fylde Borough Local Plan

Policy SP2 Development in Countryside Areas
Policy EP10 Building Design and Landscape Character
Policy EP11 Building Design and Landscape Character
Policy EP12 Conservation of Trees and Woodland
Policy EP13 Tree Planting
Policy EP14 Landscaping
Policy EP18 Nature Conservation
Policy EP19 Nature Conservation
Policy EP22 Protection of Agricultural Land
Policy EP23 Pollution of Surface Water
Policy EP24 Pollution of Ground Water
Policy EP28 Light Pollution

Consultations

Fylde Borough Council – No observations received.

Singleton Parish Council – No objection. Whilst the Parish Council acknowledge that there will be times when HGVs associated with Singleton Highways Depot will be required to use Grange Road and Church Road, the Parish Council would prefer this usage to be kept to a minimum.

LCC Assistant Director (Highways) – No observations received.

Environment Agency - No objection.

Representations – The application has been advertised by site notice and neighbouring residents have been notified by letter. No representations have been received.

Advice

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of agricultural land to be used as an extension to the County Council's Highways Depot at Singleton. The extended area would be surfaced in crushed stone and used for an external storage and vehicle parking area with a landscaping strip along its western boundary to help screen the site. An area of woodland in poor condition to the south of the depot would be subject to further landscaping to provide enhanced screening.

Singleton depot is used to provide highways maintenance services for the Fylde and Wyre areas including winter road gritting and as a strategic operational highway and grounds maintenance depot. There is a similar highway depot site at Green Lane, Garstang but this site cannot be expanded any further due to a lack of space. The intention is therefore to close the Green Lane depot and transfer all operations to the

Singleton depot. To do this, the Singleton depot will have to expand onto land immediately adjacent to the existing western boundary of the depot.

The application has been submitted by the Environment Director and must therefore be determined by the Development Control Committee.

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In considering the issues that arise from the proposed development, it is necessary to take into consideration the relevant policies of the Development Plan and the planning history of the site and all other material planning considerations. Government policy is a material consideration that should be given appropriate weight in the decision making process. The policies of the Development Plan for this site is the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

The proposed extension is on land designated as a Countryside Area for the purposes of Policy SP2 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan. This policy permits development in countryside areas providing the proposal falls within one of a number of categories including development essentially needed for the purposes of agriculture, horticulture or other uses appropriate to a rural area. Development essentially needed for the continuation of an existing enterprise, facility or operation, of a type and scale which would not harm the character of the surrounding countryside. Is also acceptable under this policy.

Paragraph 28 of the NPPF seeks to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. Policy EP11 seeks to achieve development of a high standard of design.

Policy EP22 does not permit development which would involve the permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land where it could reasonably take place on previously developed sites, on land within the boundaries of existing developed areas or on poorer quality agricultural land. Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

The applicant has advised that the proposed expansion is to allow all operations at the Green Lane depot in Garstang to transfer to the Singleton depot so as to provide a more efficient highway service. The Green Lane depot cannot be expanded any further due to a lack of space and due to the proximity of residential properties which has implications for the delivery of certain aspects of the service. The Singleton site is an existing depot that is centrally located for the highways services in the Fylde and Wyre areas that are provided from these depot sites. Given the predominately rural nature of this area, there are no other areas of industrial land available that are located in a suitably central location. Whilst the expansion of the Singleton site may not be essentially needed for the continuation of highway services, the concentration of such services on the Singleton site would have operational benefits.

The development would increase the size of the current depot by 0.43 hectares over the current area of 0.73 hectares so the increase would be significant. The main issue to consider is if the proposed extension would be of a scale that would be detrimental to the character of the countryside.

The proposal does not involve the erection of any new building and the additional land would only be used for the storage of plant and highway maintenance materials. Any views of the extended area would be from the west across agricultural fields. The nearest properties in that direction are 950m away near Singleton, which is a substantial distance that would minimise any visual impact. The site area is visible from Grange Road to the west of the site. However, the applicant has proposed a landscaping strip with trees along the western boundary of the site that would help to screen the extended areas from views from Grange Road. The western boundary of the existing site has very little screening and the landscaping proposals in the current application would have the benefit of screening both the existing depot and the extended area when viewed from Grange Road. The development also provides for landscape enhancement works to be undertaken to part of Fishers Slack Wood immediately to the south of the depot. This wood includes a number of dead and dying trees. Whilst this re planting work would not greatly improve the screening of the site from the most sensitive viewpoints, it would have some general visual and ecological benefits.

The application site currently forms part of an agricultural field containing land of best and most versatile quality. However, the area of land lost to agriculture would be a relatively narrow strip along the edge of the depot which is not of significant area and therefore the loss of best and most versatile land is considered acceptable.

Policies EP13, EP14 and EP18 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan relate to tree planting, landscaping and the creation of natural features. Policy EP13 seeks to encourage, through appropriate schemes, the planting and maintenance of young trees to improve the rural environment. Policy EP14 states that development schemes must make suitable provision for landscape planting and, where appropriate, planning permission will be granted with conditions to ensure the proper implementation and maintenance of such schemes. Policy EP18 seeks to create additional natural features, such as a group of trees, as part of a development scheme.

To ensure any screen planting would achieve the intended purpose, it is considered that a landscaping condition be imposed to require the submission and approval of an acceptable landscaping scheme prior to the commencement of development. The scheme should provide for landscaping on all boundaries of the extended area, to provide for the replacement of the dead trees on the south side of the site and to ensure that the landscaping strip would be delineated and protected from the storage activities on the proposed extension. . Subject to the imposition of such a landscaping condition, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of Policies EP11, EP13, EP14, EP18 and EP22 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

Although there are no proposals to remove any trees around the site other than the dead trees on the south side of the site, a condition is recommended that requires

the protection of the other existing trees and replacement of any that are lost. The retention, protection and replacement of trees would accord with Policies EP10 and EP12 of the Fylde Local Plan.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, an Amphibian Survey and a Bat Survey have been submitted with the application. There are a number of dead trees in the area to the south of the existing depot within the area that is proposed to be further landscaped. Whilst the bat survey did not identify any bats within those trees, there are two trees with high potential. It is considered that these trees should be retained within the landscaping area and that in line with the recommendation of the Habitat and Bat Surveys, a condition is imposed to protect nesting birds and to require details to be submitted for the provision of bird and bat nesting/ roosting boxes. In the event that bats are found during the removal of the other dead trees to the south of the site, then provision would have to be made for their protection. A note is proposed to address this. Subject to such conditions and note, the development would accord with Policy EP19 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

It would be expected that vehicle movements associated with the site would increase. The access would not be altered but it is of a good standard and links directly with the A585. The highways used by depot traffic therefore have capacity to accommodate any increases in traffic that might occur.

Singleton Parish Council has raised no objection but has requested that Grange Road and Church Road on the east side of Singleton are gritted during periods of cold weather. LCC's Public Realm Manager has advised that these roads do not fall within their criteria for precautionary treatment and therefore could not be included within or added to their winter maintenance schedule for road gritting. The request that the use of Grange Road and Church Road be kept to a minimum by HGVs associated with Singleton Highways Depot is acknowledged. However, to put in place a restriction so that HGV's could only access and egress the Highways Depot from the A585 Fleetwood Road may not be operationally possible as access is required from all roads to this depot. Due to the proximity of the depot to the A585 which provides a link to a large area of the county served by this depot, it would be expected that most traffic would use this route rather than Grange Road in order to reach many destinations.

The parking of vehicles and storage of equipment has the potential to create pollution from surface run off and seepage. The Environment Agency do not object and have not provided any comments. Nonetheless, it is recommended that a condition be imposed to require that no development take place until a scheme and programme for the disposal of surface waters and drainage has been approved in writing. Subject to such a condition, the proposal would comply with Policies EP23 and EP24 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

The depot site is floodlit every night for security purposes. Should it be the intention to provide any additional lighting within the extended areas or from within the existing site, then the details of such should be subject to further approval. Subject to the imposition of such a condition the development is considered to be acceptable in terms of the impact on the amenities of the local area and complies with Policy EP28 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

To conclude, Singleton depot is used to provide highways maintenance services for the Fylde and Wyre areas including winter road gritting and as a strategic operational highway and grounds maintenance depot. The intention is to improve the efficiency of the highways service by closing the highway depot site at Green Lane, Garstang, and consolidating all operations at the Singleton depot. To do this, the Singleton depot will have to expand and the applicant is therefore seeking additional land as further expansion at the Green Lane site is not possible.

The proposed development does raise some conflict with Policy SP2 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan, as the development is not essentially needed for the continued provision of highways services in this area. However, there is clearly a need to ensure that existing operations and businesses in rural areas are given some latitude to expand where it would not generate any unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbouring properties or no significant harmful impact on the character, appearance or nature conservation value of the countryside. On balance, it is considered that the benefits of concentrating highways maintenance services on this site would outweigh any conflict with Policies SP2 and SP8 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan... It is therefore recommended that the development be supported subject to appropriate conditions that provide adequate protection of the landscape, the environment and local amenity.

In view of the scale, location and nature of the proposed development it is considered no Convention Rights as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998 would be affected.

Recommendation

That planning permission be **Granted** subject to the following conditions:

Time Limits

1. The development shall commence not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Imposed pursuant to Section 91 (1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Working Programme

2. The development shall be carried out, except where modified by the conditions to this permission, in accordance with the following documents:
 - a) The Planning Application received by the Director of Transport and Environment on 07 November 2014.
 - b) Submitted Plans and documents received by the Director of Transport and Environment on 07 November 2014:

Drawing No. A01 - Location Plan

Drawing No. A02 - Proposed Site Plan

c) All schemes and programmes approved in accordance with this permission.

Reason : To minimise the impact of the development on the amenities of the area and to conform with Policies SP2, SP8, EP10, EP11, EP12, EP13, EP14, EP18, EP19, EP22, EP23, EP24 and EP28 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

Landscaping

3. No development shall take place until a scheme and programme for the landscaping of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment. The scheme and programme shall include details of:
- a) the location and dimensions of a planting belt along the entire western side of the site.
 - b) the ground works to be undertaken within the planting belt to prepare the land for tree and shrub planting including soil materials to be used, grading, soiling and seeding or other methods for securing vegetation cover.
 - c) the location of the relocated fencing with respect to the landscaping belt.
 - d) details for the landscaping of the area to the south of the depot including works to remove any existing ground contamination and works to prepare the land for additional tree and shrub planting.
 - e) details for the management of any dead or dying trees in the area to the south of the depot including the retention of trees T1 and T2 as identified within the submitted protected species survey for bats.
 - f) the planting of tree and shrub screening belts including numbers, types and sizes of species to be planted, spacings of plants, protection measures for individual plants and methods of planting.
 - g) details for the seeding of any landscaping areas including mixes to be used and rates of application.

The landscaping works contained in the approved scheme and programme shall be implemented in the first available planting season following commencement of development and thereafter be maintained for a period of five years including weed control, replacement of dead and dying trees and maintenance of protection measures.

Reason: In the interests of visual and local amenity and the local environment and to conform with Policies EP11, EP13, EP14 and EP18 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

4. Any additional fencing that is required to enclose the site boundary shall match the design and colour of existing fencing on the boundary of the site.

Reason : In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and to conform with Policy SP2 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

5. All hedges and trees forming part of the site boundaries or to be retained within the site shall be protected from any damage and maintained throughout the development.

The requirements of this condition shall not apply to any dead or dying trees located in the existing woodland immediately to the south of the existing depot site.

Reason: In the interests of visual and local amenity and the local environment and to conform with Policies EP10 and EP12 of the Fylde Local Plan.

6. No vegetation shall be removed during the bird-breeding season between 1 March and 31 July inclusive unless it has been previously checked and found clear of nesting birds in accordance with Natural England's guidance and if appropriate, an exclusion zone set up around any vegetation to be protected. No work shall be undertaken within the exclusion zone until birds and any dependant young have vacated the area.

Reason: To protect nesting birds and to conform with Policy EP19 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

Safeguarding of Watercourses and Drainage

7. No development shall take place until a scheme and programme to make provision for the collection, treatment and disposal of all water entering or arising on the site to ensure that there shall no discharge of contaminated or polluted drainage to ground or surface waters has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment.

The works contained in the approved scheme and programme shall be implemented as part of the development of the site

Reason: To safeguard local watercourses and drainages and avoid the pollution of any watercourse or groundwater resource or adjacent land and to conform with Policies EP23 and EP24 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

8. Any chemical, oil or fuel storage containers on the site shall be sited on an impervious surface with bund walls; the bunded areas shall be capable of containing 110% of the container or containers' total volume and shall enclose within their curtilage all fill and draw pipes, vents, gauges and sight glasses.

There must be no drain through the bund floor or walls. Double skinned tanks may be used as an alternative only when the design and construction has first been approved, in writing, by the Director of Transport and Environment.

Reason: To safeguard local watercourses and drainages and avoid the pollution of any watercourse or groundwater resource or adjacent land and to conform with Policies EP23 and EP24 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

Floodlighting

9. No additional lighting shall be erected to illuminate the site unless the details of such lighting including the position, direction and design of such lighting has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment. Any such details shall include provisions to reduce light pollution to adjacent land.

Thereafter, the lighting shall be operated in accordance with the approved specification at all times.

Reason: To minimise light spill beyond the site boundary and to safeguard the amenity of the area and to conform with Policy EP28 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

Building Materials

10. Within two months of the date of this planning permission, details for the location, number and design of bat and bird roosting / nesting boxes to be located within the site shall be submitted to the Director of Transport and Environment for approval in writing. The details shall contain information on the number, design and location of bat and bird nesting / roosting boxes to be installed.

The approved measures shall be installed within six months of the commencement of the development and thereafter retained at the site.

Reason: To provide opportunities for nesting birds and bats and to conform with Policy EP19 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan.

Definitions

Planting Season: The period between 1 October in any one year and 31 March in the following year.

Director of Transport and Environment : means the Director of Transport and Environment of the County Planning Authority or any successor position to that post

Notes

If bats are found or suspected at anytime during the felling of the trees, work in that area should cease immediately until further advice has been sought from Natural

England and/or the scheme ecologist. The scheme ecologist, Natural England or their agents in the Lancashire area will be able to locate a licensed bat worker to remove any bats present which might be harmed during the works. If bats are exposed during the works and are vulnerable to harm, gloves or a container should be used to move them to a dark and quiet area, until a bat worker has been contacted.

If development works are to be undertaken during the breeding bird season, which runs from March to September inclusive, then an assessment by an Ecologist for breeding birds should be undertaken prior to works. If breeding birds are found, it is likely that works will have to be delayed until breeding has ceased. It is good practice to remove all affected breeding bird habitat during the winter months prior to works starting to prevent delays.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Ext
LCC/2014/0126	11 June 2014	Rob Jones/Environment/ 34128

Reason for Inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A