

Item C2

Application for the use of part of the former brickworks for landscape materials storage and processing at Sevenoaks Brickworks, Sevenoaks – John Bourne & Company Ltd (MR TQ 538579)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 1 October 2002.

Summary: Continued use of existing storage and processing facility for a further two years.

Recommendation: Temporary Permission.

Local Member: Mr N. Chard

Unrestricted

Site and Planning History

1. The application site covers part of the former Sevenoaks Brickworks at Greatness operated by Ibstock Brick Hudson Ltd. Brickmaking ceased some years ago but the site remains an active mineral working with clay being excavated and exported to the company's brickworks in Surrey. The site also lies within the area of planning permission SE/00/2739 granted on 7 December 2001 for the restoration of Greatness Quarry by development of an integrated Waste Management facility. The infilling of the former clay quarry will enable the final restoration of the clay pit and former brickworks. The infilling permission has yet to be commenced.
2. John Bourne & Co. Ltd, the applicants, were granted planning permission in 1996 on a part of the Sevenoaks Quarry [Tilcon] site for preparing landscape materials. This is carried out by blending soils and compost with quarried sands. The company occupy former quarry buildings adjacent to Farm Road. The applicants were granted permission for the existing use of the brickworks site in March 2000, and have operated their storage and processing facility in conjunction with their Farm Road operation since that date. That permission was temporary, and expired on 13 March 2002.
3. To the north of the site is the Maidstone-London railway line, to the west is the active clay working, to the east is public footpath SU3 which crosses the railway line from Otford, passes by the site before joining Farm Road. Farm Road is the access road to the clay working and the former brickworks and is the sole vehicular access. Farm Road passes to the south through Sevenoaks Quarry, an active sand quarry operated by Tilcon South Ltd, before joining the public highway at Bat and Ball Station. This highway was provided in the 1980s as a purpose built access to serve both Tilcon and Ibstock operations at Greatness.
4. The Greatness area of Sevenoaks, including the long standing mineral operations, are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, as is the application site. A site location plan is attached.

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Proposal

5. The proposal seeks to continue the existing use of the site for a further two years. That use consists of the import of soils and bark and the blending of soils with sand to service the construction and landscape industries within a 30 mile radius of Sevenoaks.
6. The soil materials are brought to the site by tipper lorries, tipped on the existing hard surfaces and formed into stockpiles. The soils are screened and then stockpiled for future use. The only machinery used on site is a mobile screener and blender serviced by a wheeled loading shovel. The company indicate that the machinery is kept in good working order and properly silenced.
7. The applicant advises that his proposal generates 16 lorry movements per day [8 in and 8 out] onto the public highway. These use the existing Farm Road and access to the public highway via Bat and Ball Road. The applicant has erected signs to limit vehicle speeds to 20mph to safeguard pedestrians on Farm Road.
8. The company operate the site between 0700 to 1800 hours Mondays to Friday and 0700 to 1300 hours on Saturdays, which are the same operating hours as already permitted for the existing processing operation.

Development Plan

9. The application site lies within an existing quarry operation and within an area for which planning permission exists for restoration by infilling and the Development Plan should be read in this context.

Kent Structure Plan (adopted December 1996)

MGB3 - Presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt

Sevenoaks District Local Plan (adopted March 2000)

GB2 - Presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt

Consultations

10. Consultees views on the proposal are summarised below. Any further views received by the date of the meeting will be reported verbally. In order that the County Planning Authority can seek to achieve Best Value Performance targets, consultees are given 28 days to respond to consultation. They are advised that if no response is received in that period they will be considered to have 'no comments' to make on the application. This is reflected in the following summary.

Sevenoaks District Council: No comments received.

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Sevenoaks Town Council: Object: consider the application should be refused on the following grounds:

- 1) Traffic – increased use of Farm Road next to the footpath is totally unacceptable as it will be detrimental to the safety of pedestrians.
- 2) Intensification of industrial use unacceptable as this would be to the detriment of the area.
- 3) Increased noise, dust and visual intrusion not acceptable as the amenities of the nearby residential properties will be adversely affected.

Environment Agency: No comments received.

Transport Planning: No objection subject to conditions limiting vehicle movements to 16 per day as proposed.

Rail Track: No objection, comment that there appears to be no change to the previous application and therefore have no further comment.

Public Rights of Way [West Kent Office]: No objection, and is pleased to note that the applicant has sought to address any potential conflict between pedestrian and vehicular use by means of improved signing at the site; considers that a regime of path sweeping and pot hole repairs would be of benefit to pedestrians.

Local Member

12. The local Member, Mr N. Chard has advised that he has no objection to the application.

Representations

13. The application was publicised by notice posted on site and the public right of way. There are no properties within 90 metres of the site boundary. To date no representations have been received.

Discussion

14. Permission was granted in 2000 for a similar application to the current proposal and has operated successfully since that time. The application arrives as a fresh proposal for consideration as the applicant failed to seek renewal under the previous permission before it expired.

15. The principle points for consideration relate to the location in the MGB and the objection of the Town Council.

16. The application site is in the MGB, but the proposal would not take any fresh or greenfield land being located in an old brickworks. That works and quarry will be

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restored under the infilling scheme permitted under SE/00/2739. Against this background the further temporary use of the site would not prejudice green belt objectives.

17. The Sevenoaks Town Council raise objection on three counts, increased traffic being detrimental to footpath users, industrial intensification and impact on nearby residential properties, whereas when consulted on the previous application they raised 'no objection'. I am not aware of any change in circumstances between the previous proposal that has operated for two years and the one before Members. The traffic levels remain the same at 16 movements per day and so do not constitute any increase and are well below levels that would have occurred with a brickworks in full production. The PROW officer has no objection to the proposal and conditions can be imposed to secure signage for pedestrians together with sweeping of Farm Road. It remains that Farm Road has served the dual function of path and quarry/brickworks access for many years. The implementation of the quarry infill proposal will bring about the closure of Farm Road to regular use and its enhancement as a footpath.
18. The continued storage of soils and bark will not bring about an intensification of industrial use. It is a small scale operation in an old brickworks which will cease within two years as proposed by the operator.
19. There are no properties within 500 metres of the site. The site has operated for some two years and in that period I have received no complaints in relation to noise, dust and visual intrusion. I would suggest that this reflects the remoteness of the operation being undertaken in an old brickwork site.

Summary

20. The proposed development is linked to an existing facility on Farm Road operated by the applicants. The site lies within an established mineral working site which is located within the MGB and are subject to proposals for infilling and restoration. I agree with the applicant that the proposed activity of open storage and processing is unlikely to adversely impact on the open character of the Green Belt. The objection of the Sevenoaks Town Council, given the nature of the site, location and past operation, appears to be overstated and I cannot support their views. Consequently, I see no overriding reason to refuse the applicant's proposal for a two year temporary use of this land.

Recommendation

21. I RECOMMEND that TEMPORARY PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions including, limiting to 2 years, hours of operations, limiting of lorry movements, environmental safeguards, signage and sweeping of Farm Road to benefit pedestrians.

Case Officer: Mike Hare	Tel. no. 01622 221055
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Background Documents: see section heading
