

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2nd June 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/
Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

S/0410/10/F – OVER

Polytunnel at Land to the West of Hansons Needingworth Quarry, Long Lane Holme Drove, Over Pit, for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Mr Chris Hudson)

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 14th May 2010

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination as the recommendation of approval would conflict with written representations on material planning grounds received from Over Parish Council.

Site and Proposal

1. The application site forms part of an operating sand and gravel quarry, which involves gradual restoration of the quarry to a nature reserve managed by the RSPB, as part of a Section 106 agreement between Cambridge County Council and the RSPB.
2. The site falls outside of the village framework of Over and is located to the west of an existing quarry compound; to the north is an existing quarry conveyor belt and to the south is a lake, preceded by a 1m high earth bank. The surrounding area comprises mostly open grassland and quarry works with private access gained from a track to the east, which connects onto Long Holme Drove.
3. The planning application, registered on 19th March 2010, seeks approval to erect a single polytunnel for the propagation of reeds on site in order to increase the speed of reed bed establishment in the restoration project. The proposed polytunnel measures 4.9m by 12.9m with a ridge height of 2.6m and would be constructed of constructed of steel hoops and polythene sheets.

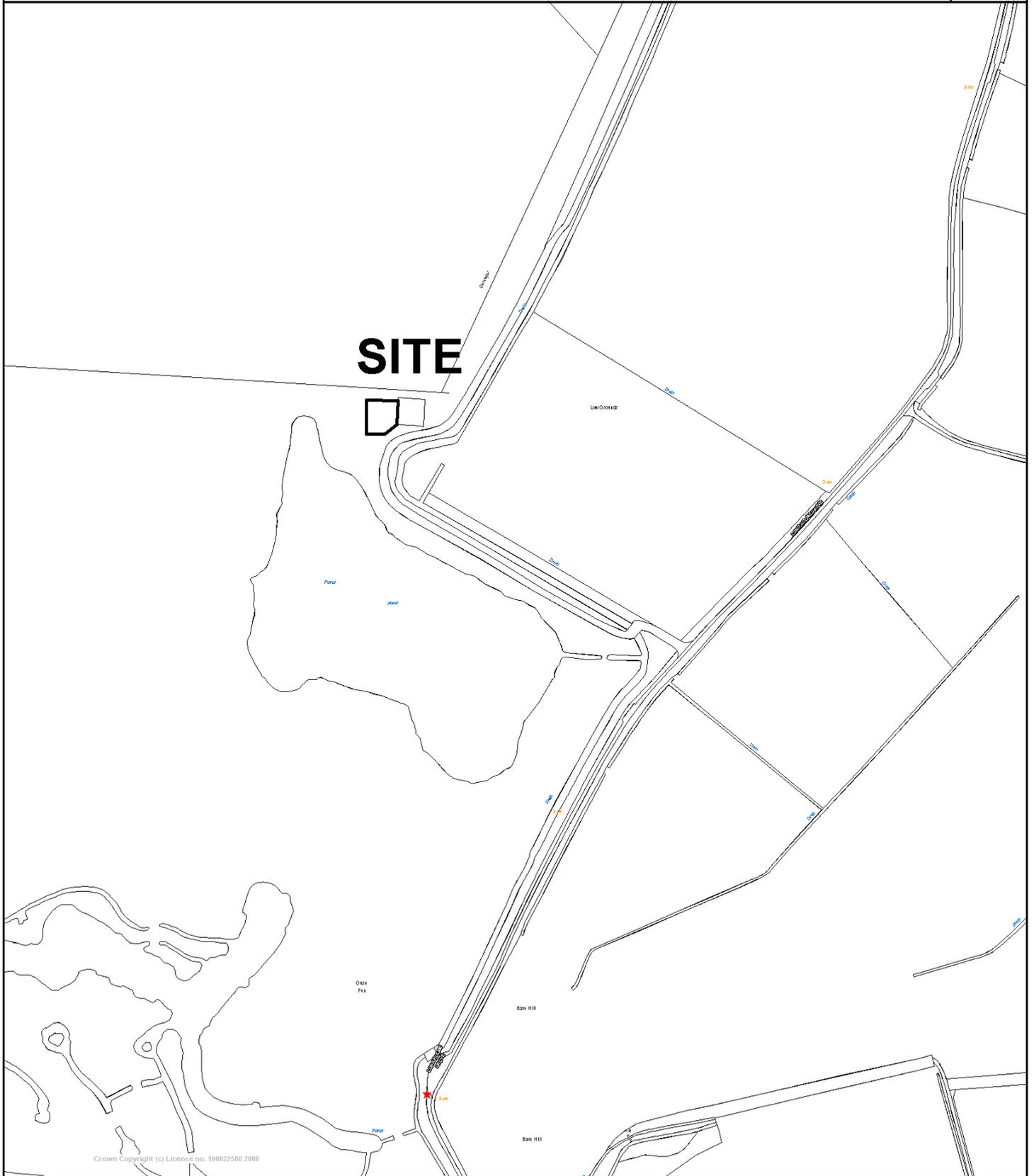
Planning History

4. In 1999 the site gained consent from Cambridge County Council for the creation of a wetland habitat following excavation and processing of sand and gravel (ref **S/1020/99/CM**). Planning condition A4 states that no fixed plant; or machinery, building, structures and erections shall be erected, extended, installed or replaced within the site without the prior written approval of the Mineral Planning Authority.

Planning Policy

5. **National Policy**

Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Planning Policy Statement 9 Biological and Geological Conservation



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6. **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (Adopted July 2007):**

DP/1 (Sustainable Development), **DP/2** (Design of New Development), **DP/3** (Development Criteria), **NE/6** (Biodiversity) and **NE/11** (Flood Risk).

7. **Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents:**

Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009
Landscape in New Developments SPD

Consultation

8. **Over Parish Council** Recommend refusal on the grounds that this would be out of keeping with the surrounding rural landscape.

9. **Ecological Officer** I write to support to support the RSPB's application for a polytunnel. I am aware of the extensive reedbed that the RSPB are creating adjacent to the River Ouse. It will be one of the largest in the country and make a very significant to the County and National Biodiversity Action Plan for reedbeds.

The common reed (*Phragmites australis*) can be hard to establish under certain climatic conditions. Young plants are susceptible to frost damage, pest attack and grazing from birds. The RSPB need very large quantities of reed and I am aware that they are propagating some reeds from cuttings, layering and root stems. However, the propagation of young reeds is an activity that they feel is required to aid the creation of this nationally valuable habitat.

I support the application and would draw Members' attention to the fact that the operation is a temporary one and Key Principle in Planning Policy Statement 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), which states that development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity and geological conservation should be permitted.

10. **Landscape Officer** - comments not yet received.

11. **Cambridge County Council** - comments not yet received.

12. **Environment Agency** - comments not yet received.

Representations

13. None received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

14. The key issues to be judged in the determination of the application are the impact of the development on the character of the landscape and the countryside.

Impact on the Rural Landscape

15. The principle of the proposed development would appear to accord with general countryside Policy DP/7, which states that 'Outside urban and village frameworks, only development for agricultural, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other

uses which need to be located in the countryside will be permitted.” The assessment in this case is therefore considered to focus on whether the siting of the development is appropriate within the specific location in which it is set.

16. The appearance of the development is similar to other polytunnels typically found on agricultural land and usually constructed of steel hoops and polythene sheets. In assessing the design of the structure it is evident that the overall height of 2.6 metres would present a low form of development with a curved roof that would soften its appearance. The overall footprint of the structure, together with its height, would in my mind appear to be relatively modest in size and scale with regard to the location.
17. The quarry compound immediately east of the site does mitigate the impact of the development; however the existing industrial appearance created by the compound can only be viewed as a temporary setup until the cessation of extraction. The proposal would therefore otherwise be located in relatively open countryside. The appearance of the development is however not considered to have an adverse impact on the rural landscape given its modest size and scale and the existing and proposed 1m earth bank to the south of the building which would help to reduce the exposure of the building. Further planting has been discussed with the developer who has explained that whilst the application is limited in size, it is the intention of the RSPB to provide more landscaping outside of the site area.
18. The location and appearance of the development is not considered to have an adverse impact on the rural landscape due to its modest size and scale, its low form and the proposed embankment that would reduce some of its exposure. The assessment of the development must also be balanced against the benefits from its functional use, which the ecology officer has supported above.

Conclusion

19. The size, scale and design of the development is not considered to have an adverse visual impact on the countryside and the purpose for which it would serve is supported by Policy DP/7 and Planning Policy Statements 7 and 9.

Recommendation

20. That the application, be approved, subject to the following conditions:
 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.
(Reason - To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development, which have not been acted upon.)
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PO1, PO2 and PO3.
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Circular 11/95 – Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions
- National Planning Policy Statements
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007.
- Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009
- Landscape in New Developments SPD
- Planning Application File S/1020/99/CM

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