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TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
REWILDING PROJECT INCLUDING PROVISION OF WOODLAND, CONSTRUCTION
OF A WETLAND LAKE AND ANGLING LAKE AND ERECTION OF BOAT
HOUSE
LAND AT VALLEY LANE, GREAT FINBOROUGH

Planning Statement

Ref: 2918
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INTRODUCTION

1. This Planning Statement has been produced in support of a planning application for a rewilding project including the provision of woodland and wildlife meadows, construction of a wetland lake and an angling lake and, erection of a boat house on land at Valley Lane, Great Finborough.
2. The land in question is currently used for agricultural purposes. It is grade III agricultural land. The land currently has little if any wildlife value.
3. The first part of the scheme is the woodland planting and the wildlife meadows. As tree planting in itself does not require planning permission, the tree planting is not included within the red line of the application site, but it is included within the blue line (other land in the ownership of the applicant). The swathes of land to be planted as wildflower meadows are also excluded from the red line for the same reason. Being meadows, the land remains within the definition of agriculture and so no change of use will take place.
4. The second part of the proposal is the excavation of the two lakes. One will be a wildlife wetland lake. The other smaller lake will be used for angling. Both lakes have been designed by a specialist aquatic ecologist (Framlingham Environmental) to ensure that they benefit and encourage wildlife and biodiversity. The angling lake is not a commercial operation and will not be open to the public. Framlingham Environmental Biodiversity Enhancement Statement also accompanies the application.
5. The third part of the proposal is the building which will be used to store tractors and machinery used for the future maintenance of the land. The building will also include a angling welfare room which will provide space for the storage of angling equipment (including washing and toilet facilities). The building will also include a boat house. The boat will be used for angling and for the maintenance of both lakes.
6. Footpath 5 Great Finborough crosses the application site. This route is little used, not giving access to any facility in the village. Most walkers use Valley Lane for preference and as part of a 6km southern circular walk route promoted by the parish. Footpath 5 is also subject to long standing obstruction by a chicken shed south of the site. The application impacts the definitive alignment of the footpath and, should planning permission be granted, it will be necessary to divert the route before the angling lake could be created. The current alignment is also at odds with the proposed tree belt and orchard

planting and would lessen the conservation value of the wildlife meadow if retained on its current alignment.

7. The planning application is therefore supported by an application made under s257(1A) of the Town and Country Planning Act for a public path diversion order, on the grounds that, should planning permission be granted it would be necessary to divert the route to enable the angling lake and landscaping to be created as approved.
8. The proposed route of the footpath is supported by the Biodiversity Supporting Statement, which concludes that an appropriate balance between public access and conservation objectives is achieved by the proposed diversion. The proposed route enhances the current low amenity value of the footpath over arable land and is likely to increase local use of the footpath and may attract new visitors. It has the additional benefit for the applicant of resolving the obstruction of the southern section of the route by the chicken shed.
9. The route of the existing footpath and the proposed diversion are shown within the red line site area.
10. The application site is not within a Special Landscape Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or any other area of Special Landscape designation.

PLANNING STATEMENT

11. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (As Amended) requires planning decisions to be made in accordance with development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
12. In this case, the development plan consists of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998), the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008) and the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012).
13. The Council are in the process of producing a new joint Local Plan with Babergh District Council. The emerging Local Plan (eLP) has recently been the subject of public consultation on post examination modifications. Further Hearings with regards to those modifications are scheduled to take place in the coming months. Therefore at this stage the eLP's policies have only limited weight.
14. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration.

Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998

15. The application site is located outside of any settlement boundary and therefore for planning purposes is located in the countryside.

16. Policy CL1 sets out the Council's guiding principle for development in the countryside, it states:

“The landscape quality and character of the countryside will be protected for its own sake. Proposals for development in the countryside should be sited and designed to have minimum adverse effect on the appearance of the landscape and should seek to positively contribute to its diverse character through tree planting and the creation of hedgerows, deciduous woodlands and other wildlife habitats.

In the countryside, favourable consideration will normally be given to development which is required to meet the needs of agriculture, forestry and mineral extraction. Proposals for outdoor recreation or tourism, which can demonstrate a need to be located in the countryside and which support the rural economy, will be considered on their merits. Development should be well related to the existing pattern of towns and villages.”.

17. In this case, the proposal is for outdoor recreation and includes the creation of hedgerows, woodlands and other wildlife habitats. The proposal therefore accords with policy CL1.

18. Policy CL11 deals with high quality agricultural land, it states:

“The district planning authority will encourage the conservation of agricultural land. Particular protection will be afforded to the best and most versatile agricultural land (namely grades 1, 2 and 3a of Maff's agricultural land classification)”.

19. In this case, there is no conflict with policy CL11 because the proposed development does not result in the irreversible loss of agricultural land. The land could be re-used for agricultural purposes in the future should the need arise.

20. Policy RT6 deals with sport and recreation facilities in the countryside. Angling is a sport and therefore that element of the development should be considered under policy RT6, it states:

“Proposals for new, or extensions to existing, sport and recreational uses within the countryside will be permitted where:-

- The proposed use will not have a detrimental impact on landscape, wildlife, ecology, agriculture or forestry and will not cause disturbance to other users of the countryside and occupants of residential property;

- The proposed site has good access to a local road network which can accommodate the level of traffic likely to be generated. In the case of uses intended to serve large numbers of people, then site access should be to the primary route network;

- The scale, design, layout and materials of the proposed development respects the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and there is no materially detrimental impact on existing settlements. Special care will be taken when dealing with proposals which include floodlighting;

- Natural landscape features including hedgerows and trees have been largely retained and enhanced and, if appropriate, additional screening and landscaping is provided to minimise any visual intrusion caused by the development. Wildlife features should be treated in a similar manner to maintain and enhance existing habitats;

- Buildings and other structures should be directly related to the proposed use. Wherever possible, re-use should be made of existing rural buildings;

- New recreational uses will be carefully assessed in areas, such as special landscape areas, vulnerable to the physical and visual impact of increased numbers of visitors and large new buildings. The degree to which proposals affect the character of these areas will be a material consideration".

21. This proposal accords with the objectives of policy RT6. It will have a positive impact on landscape, wildlife and ecology and the only building proposed is directly related to the proposed use of the land. As previously stated, the angling lake will not be a commercial operation. It will only be used by the applicant and his friends/family. Therefore, the proposal will have no material impact on highway safety as it will not generate significant vehicular movements.

Mid Suffolk Core Strategy

22. There are no policies in the Core Strategy which are specific to this proposal. Policy CS5 has some relevance as it refers to landscape.

Policy CS 5

Mid Suffolk's Environment

All development will maintain and enhance the environment, including the historic environment, and retain the local distinctiveness of the area.

To protect, manage and enhance Mid Suffolk's **biodiversity and geodiversity** based on a network of:

- Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local)
- Biodiversity Action Plan Species and Habitats, geodiversity interests within the wider environment
- Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks

and where appropriate increase opportunities for access and appreciation of biodiversity and geodiversity conservation for all sections of the community.

Emphasis will be given to the creation new habitats particularly along the Gipping, Upper Waveney and Deben river valley's in connection with flood management schemes and to contribute towards green tourism opportunities.

Landscape: The Council will protect and conserve landscape qualities taking into account the natural environment and the historical dimension of the landscape as a whole rather than concentrating solely on selected areas, protecting the District's most important components and encourage development that is consistent with conserving its overall character.

Design: Development will be of a high quality design that respects the local distinctiveness and the built heritage of Mid Suffolk, enhancing the character and appearance of the district. It should create visual interest within the street scene and where appropriate encourage active uses at ground floor level, creating uses of public space which encourage people to walk and cycle.

Historic Environment: The Council will introduce policies in the other DPDs of the Local Development Framework to protect, conserve and where possible enhance the natural and built historic environment including the residual archaeological remains. These policies will seek to integrate conservation policies with other planning policies affecting the historic environment

23. This proposal fully accords with Policy CS5. The proposal will benefit wildlife interests, enhance the quality of the landscape and would not harm the historic environment.

National Planning Policy Framework

24. This proposal will fulfil the three objectives of sustainable development described at paragraph 8 of the NPPF. The proposed development will benefit the local economy by providing job opportunities for local tradesmen during the excavation of the two lakes and the construction of the new building. The trees to be planted on the site will be secured from local sources and therefore this too will benefit local businesses.

25. The development will also secure a social benefit. It is a well-documented fact that spending time in the countryside and undertaking country pursuits such as fishing is beneficial to mental health and wellbeing. The scheme will also provide social benefits by enhancing the route of the existing public footpath which crosses the site. The additional planting will improve the experience of the footpath users.
26. The development also fulfils the environmental objective. It will result in significant biodiversity improvements which in turn will support efforts to address climate change.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk joint Local Plan

27. Whilst the policies of the emerging Local Plan (eLP) do not yet have significant weight, they are a material consideration and indicate the direction of travel of the Councils new policies.
28. Policy SP09 concerns "*enhancement and management of the environment*", it requires in part for development to "*support and contribute to the conservation, enhancement and management of the natural and local environment and networks of green infrastructure, including landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and the historic environment and landscapes*". This proposal fully accords with policy SP09.

CONCLUSIONS

29. The proposed development will improve the visual appearance of the site and enhance the wider landscape setting.
30. The proposed development will secure significant biodiversity net gains. It will benefit wildlife interests and help to mitigate climate change.
31. The proposed development fulfils the three objectives of sustainable development and can take place without causing any material harm to any interests of acknowledged importance.