

**Land parcel north of Hale Oak
Road
Weald**

**Prior Approval - Part 6 Forestry
Planning Statement
0314**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Part 6 Agriculture and forestry ('*GPDO*'), Class E forestry developments (a) allows for the "*erection, extension or alteration of a building*" and part (d) allows for "*other operations*" so long as they are reasonably necessary for the purposes of forestry, including afforestation.
- 1.2 Condition E.2 (1) to the GPDO, requires that this notification is made to the local planning authority ('the Council') for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority is required on the siting of the works described. The local planning authority has 28-days from receipt of this notification to make their determination as to whether prior approval is required or not.
- 1.3 The proposal is for one barn to allow the management and afforestation of the land in respect of Hale Oak Road, Sevenoaks Weald ('*the Land*'). The applicant owns around 1 hectares of land as demonstrated on drawing WBH0314 Location and building plan. The land is a large open field on the north side of Hale Oak Road, bounded by trees and hedge lines to each boundary. The intention is to turn the land to forestry. Afforestation will extend to just under 1 ha of land, planted as native broad leaf woodland.
- 1.4 The proposed afforestation enterprise will allow the sustainable harvesting of wood. For the potential of the proposed woodland to be realised and sustained, intensive management is required. An annual programme of planting, thinning and felling, running in parallel with active day-to-day management determines the success of this woodland. The new woodland will be managed in line with United Kingdom Forestry Standard. The standard provides a framework comprising guidance, regulations and protocols for the monitoring and recording of woodland management, based on recent advances in the understanding of forestry, initiatives on climate change and the role woodland can play in its mitigation and adaptation.
- 1.5 The applicant proposes to plant about 1 ha of native woodland as demonstrated on the submitted drawing. The production of timber will create a modest long-term income stream to supplement a regenerative native woodland, although some coppicing will take place to allow short term harvesting in the next 7 years. The estimate of the cost of establishing the woodland is around £3,020.00 per ha. The calculation of potential returns for woodland are unreliable, as established

methodology (such as Forest Yield) is designed for applying to even-aged existing stands of single species trees. The proposed woodland is a mix of species, which makes volume calculations difficult. These combined factors are likely to mean that predicting any predicted yields will be unreliable. But in this case, the applicant is more interested in stewardship of the land back to native woodland and is at this stage looking to balance the financial situation rather than achieve profit.

Design

- 1.6 For broadleaved forestry, timber from thinning operations might be ready to be harvested from 30 years, and clear-felling operations might be able to be carried out from 60 years. Thinning operations are typically undertaken to remove weaker trees every seven to ten years and coppicing will happen within the same timescales; the trees removed will be used for firewood as they are too small for timber or furniture. Mixed planting means that the time from planting to felling will vary, dependent on the species. The land is pasture and this requires a minimum radius of 500mm free of vegetation around each planting point. This will be carried out by either using mulching material, as specified in British Standard 5837:2005. This process, of reducing grass cover, planting trees and allowing trees to establish is labour intensive and requires machinery. The applicant will purchase and store equipment on site.
- 1.7 Trees will be planted at a density of 1,000 - 1,100 trees per ha, as explained in the ABC for broad leaf woodland. The planting and spacing of trees will be roughly one every 3m x 3m, to achieve the planting density. Initially, planting the trees in rows is required because it is easier to see the planted whips and to weed them, especially using mechanical weeding and mowing. This means trees will be planted in a 'chequerboard' pattern, with alternating groups of 9-16 trees. This pattern should appear more natural and reduces problems of inter-species competition. A chequerboard pattern is easier to manage than intermixed rows, and look more aesthetically appealing than bands of species. When planting, the varying micro climates across the site will be considered. Hardier trees will be planted on higher north-facing slope and more tender trees on lower land to the east. Pioneer and nursery trees will be positioned such that they can protect tender tree species.

Species description and benefits

- 1.8 The species mix proposed is:
- Oak - Oak is a demanding species and the use of good quality soils will enable

them to thrive. Oak is slow-growing but will provide a source of high-quality and high-value timber.

- Scots pine - A small component of Scots pine, an evergreen conifer, native to the UK will be planted. It is fast-growing and produces one of the strongest softwoods available.
- Wild Cherry - Trees can live for up to 60 years and the timber is used for veneers and furniture. The spring flowers provide nectar for bees and the fruit is eaten by birds and mammals. The foliage is beneficial for caterpillars of many species of moth.
- Common beech - This species is native to the UK and has benefits to wildlife and its dense canopy provides habitat for rare plant species and butterflies. The timber is used for fuel, furniture, cooking utensils and other uses.
- Birch trees - The open canopy provides conditions for grasses, mosses, lichens, bluebells and others to grow, whilst providing habitat and food for insects and mammals. Birch is used for furniture, handles and toys.
- Aspen trees - These provide habitat for a wide variety of insects and woodpeckers. The wood is lightweight and can be used for making surgical splints, oars and paddles.

1.9 Incrementally, over time, the harvested timber will be sold for fire wood, planking and for barn building.

The barn

1.10 The approximately 1,100 planted trees per ha across the Land will require frequent management to establish the tree stock and keep the land clear of unwanted growth. The process of creating the wood is labour intensive and involves machinery. A barn for the safe storage and maintenance of machinery is required. The barn may also accommodate a small mobile sawmill for the splitting of logs and the processing of juvenile timber yielded from the thinning process. The intended on-site machinery will include a small tractor, chipper, mower and small mobile sawmill. The machinery must be stored securely to protect the financial investment. Storage for hand tools and other paraphernalia associated with maintaining 1 ha of woodland is also required. The barn will also provide storage of harvested timber at some point in the future. Wood chip will be stored on site and recycled back into the wood to help control unwanted plant growth.

1.11 The barn will be sited near to the northern boundary. The barn will extend to just 63m² gross internal floorspace and a kentish design is proposed. The design allows

for a central bay to accommodate machinery comfortably and allow manoeuvring space, with two side bays for storage of timber, workbenches and hand tools either side. Overall, the proposed barn is considered small and reasonably necessary for the afforestation of the Land.

2. Forestry justification

- 2.1 Condition E.2 (1) confirms that development consisting of the erection of a building is permitted development subject to an application being made to the local planning authority. This notification provides the opportunity for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority in respect of the siting of the works described is required. The ability to use these permitted development rights is subject to conditions under paragraph E.1. Compliance with these conditions is explained below.

Development not permitted

E.1 Development is not permitted by Class E if—

(a) it would consist of or include the provision or alteration of a dwelling;

The proposal shown as part of this submission is designed for the storage of woodland machinery. A dwelling is not proposed.

(b) the height of any building or works within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 3 metres in height;

The proposal is more than 3 kilometres from an aerodrome. The proposed height is dictated by the need for machinery to be able to drive into the barns and tip material from a trailer for processing and storage, plus extension of machinery vertically when being maintained on the Land. Servicing will take place on site to avoid the need to transport machinery to workshops.

(c) any part of the development would be within 25 metres of the metalled portion of a trunk road or classified road; or

The submitted plans show clearly that the buildings would be more than 25 metres

from a metalled trunk or classified road.

(d) any building for storing fuel for, or waste from, a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system would be used for storing waste not produced by that boiler or system or for storing fuel not produced on land which is occupied together with that building for the purposes of forestry.

The proposal is for afforestation to create woodland over 3 ha of land. A biomass boiler is not proposed and fuel and waste will not be stored.

3. Summary

- 3.1 The GPDO grants planning permission for certain classes of development subject to meeting specific conditions and circumstances set out within the Order. If a proposal meets these requirements, then the proposal can be considered to be '*permitted development*' as it would benefit from planning permission by reason of Article 3(1) of the order. This proposed forestry barn should be considered against Schedule 2, Part 6 Class E (a) - works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building.
- 3.2 The GPDO extends permission for development to facilitate the afforestation of the land. Afforestation of the land as an intensively managed broad leaf woodland requires infrastructure to store both the machinery required to establish and then manage the wood. The barn is modest and sufficient to achieve the stated objective of afforestation. The GPDO test is for the barn to be reasonably necessary not the only option. That means, the barn design and scale cannot be dictated by the Council. Overall, the barn is reasonable in design, scale and siting for the proposed storage of machinery and long term objectives for the land. The barn is sited in accordance with the GPDO conditions and would not be unduly prominent from public vantage points given the surrounding boundary tree lines. The requirements of Part 6 are fully satisfied. The proposal is '*permitted development*' and Prior Approval is not required.