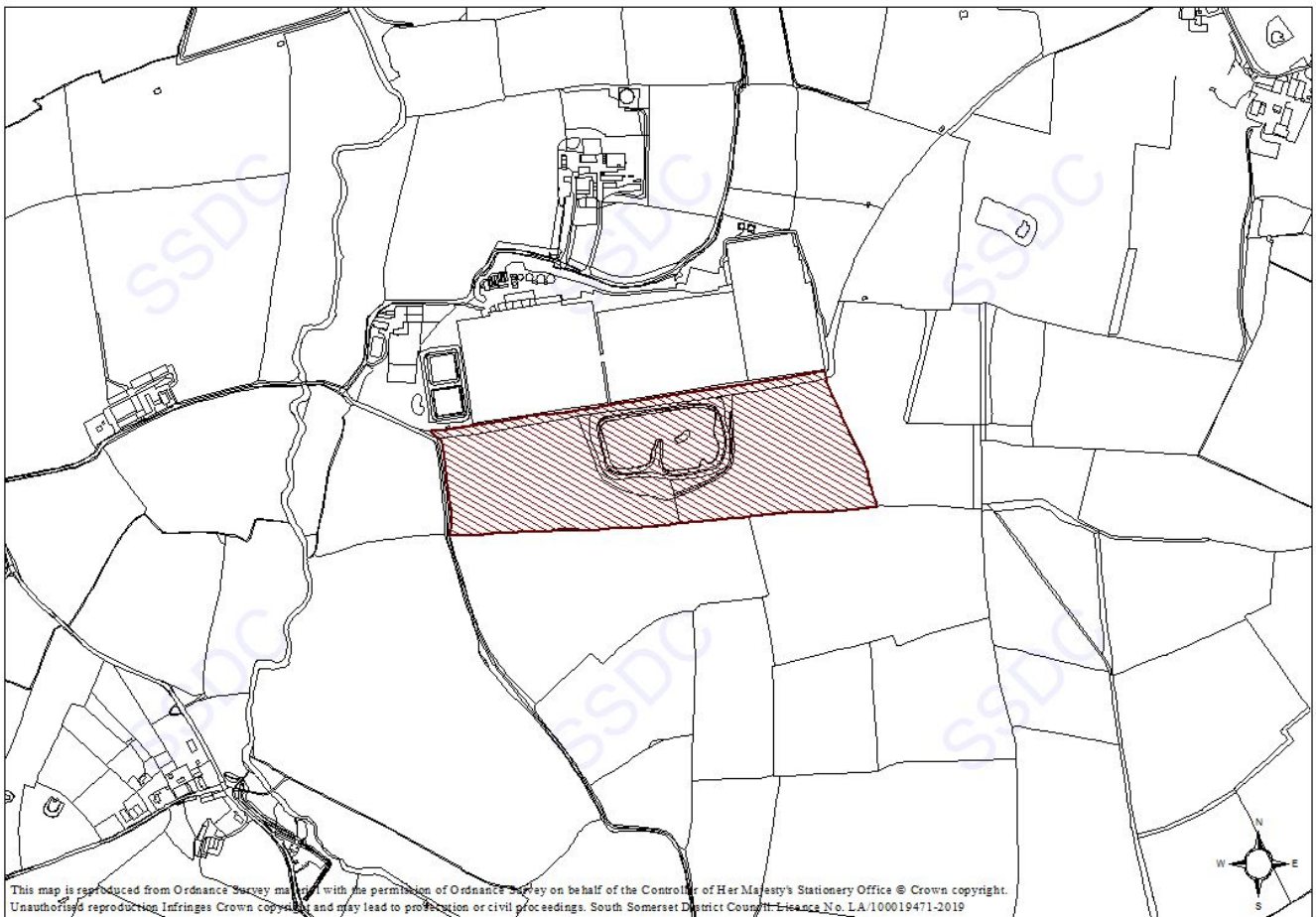


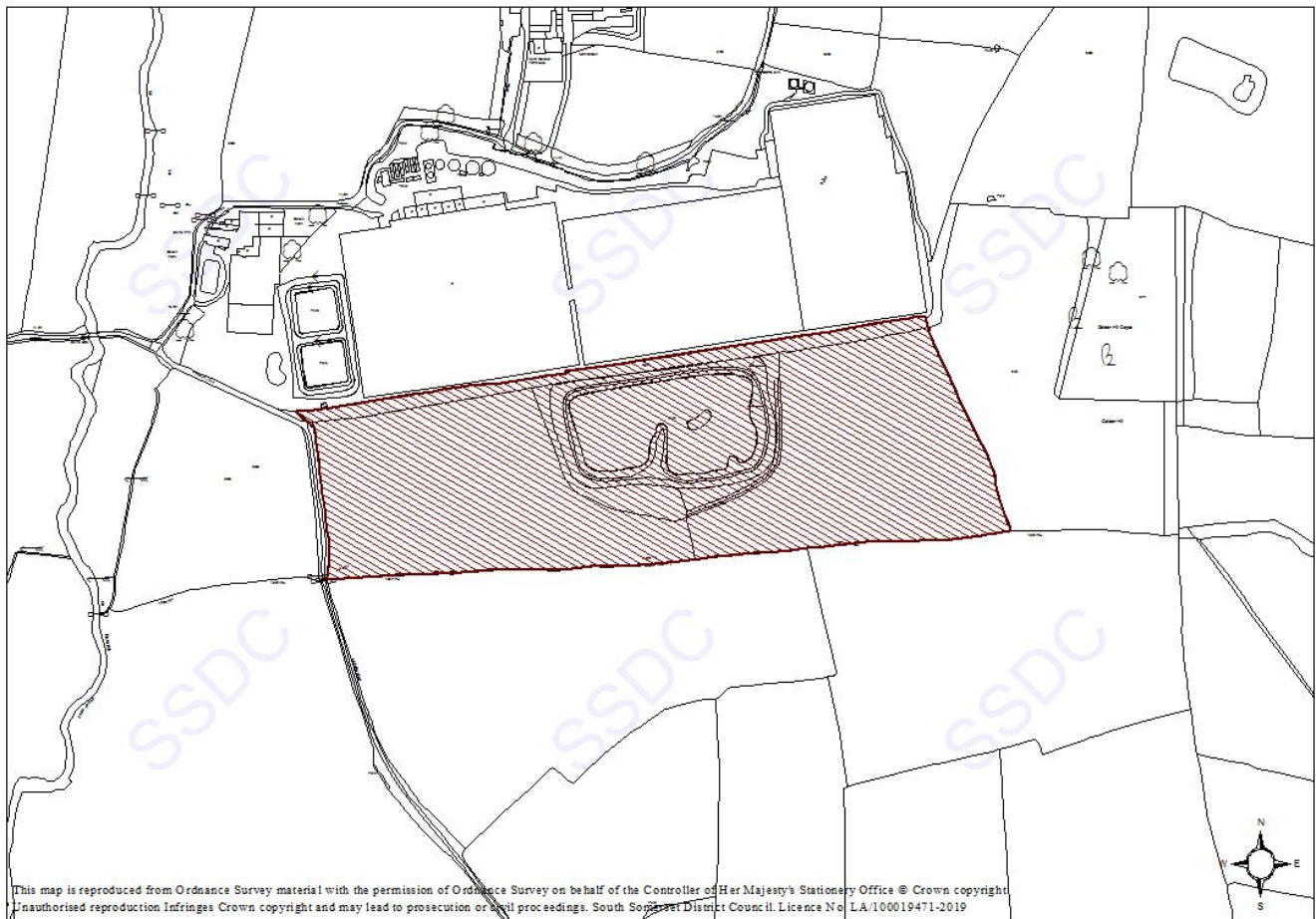
Officer Report On Planning Application: 18/02772/FUL

Proposal :	Proposed erection of 7 No. 'Spanish Style' polytunnels and associated works.
Site Address:	Land South Of Bradon Farm, North Bradon Lane, Isle Brewers.
Parish:	Isle Brewers
ISLEMOOR Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr Sue Steele
Recommending Case Officer:	John Millar Tel: (01935) 462465 Email: john.millar@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	2nd January 2019
Applicant :	Bradon Farm Soft Fruit Ltd
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Stansgate Planning, 9 The Courtyard, Timothy's Bridge Road, STRATFORD UPON AVON CV37 9NP
Application Type :	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application is classed as a 'major major' (2 hectares or more) and therefore in accordance with the Council's adopted scheme of delegation, has to be referred to Area North Committee.





SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

The application site is to the south of the existing Bradon Soft Fruit Farm, which is a strawberry growing farm close to Isle Brewers and Isle Abbots. The site comprises a 15.7 hectares agricultural site with large-scale existing glasshouse complex, and reservoir. The application site is to the south of the glasshouses, in adjoining fields.

The application is made to erect seven 'Spanish style' polytunnels on what is currently undeveloped agricultural land. These polytunnels will vary in size, covering an area of 4.37 hectares, and will have a height of 4 metres. Each polytunnel will have an aluminium frame with curved roof, and will be covered in polythene sheet. The polythene sheeting would be removed outside of the growing season (November to March), with the frames to remain in place. The proposal also includes the installation of several attenuation ponds within the site.

HISTORY

- 18/03867/FUL: Extension to existing building and the provision of fuel hoppers and water tanks (revisions to previously approved extension 07/01258/FUL) - Pending consideration.
- 07/01258/FUL: Erection of extension to greenhouses - Permitted with conditions 28/06/2007.
- 98/00712/FUL: Erection of extension to glasshouse - Permitted with conditions June 1998.
- 93/01224/FUL: Erection of extension to glasshouse - Permitted with conditions April 1995.
- 92/01176/FUL: Erection of extension to glasshouse - Application refused June 1992.
- 850886: Erection of glasshouse and boiler house/packing shed/office - Permitted with conditions July 1985.

There have also been a number of applications for extensions to the farmhouse and the siting and retention of units of temporary staff accommodation.

POLICY

The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028) was adopted on the 5th March 2015. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the adopted local plan now forms part of the development plan. As such, decisions on the award of planning permission should be made in accordance with this development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Legislation and national policy are clear that the starting point for decision-making is the development plan, where development that accords with an up-to-date local plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028)

SD1 - Sustainable Development
EP4 - Expansion of Existing Businesses in the Countryside
TA5 - Transport Impact of New Development
TA6 - Parking Standards
EQ1 - Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset
EQ2 - General Development
EQ3 - Historic Environment
EQ4 - Biodiversity
EQ7 - Pollution Control

National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 4 - Decision-making
Chapter 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Chapter 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
Chapter 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Chapter 11 - Making effective use of land
Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Practice Guidance

Climate Change
Design
Natural Environment

Policy-related Material Considerations

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (September 2013)
Somerset County Council Highways Development Control - Standing Advice (June 2017)

CONSULTATIONS

Isle Abbots Parish Council: The following comments were made:

- 1) We have no objection to the erection of 7 polytunnels.
- 2) We are concerned about 'lost' 16.5 metre articulated HGVs', which from time to time, early in the morning, have entered the village of Isle Abbots. As there are no suitable points for these vehicles

to turn round, they have had to reverse back through the narrow roads approximately 3/4 mile to a T junction. In previous cases, damage has been caused to residents' grass verges and the village bus shelter.

- 3) As a result of item 2), we thoroughly endorse the point made by Andy Nellist, Principal Planning Liaison Officer, Traffic and Transport Development, Somerset County Council, in his email dated the 13th April 2018 to PFA Consulting, whereby he states that the applicant should 'discourage the use of unsuitable roads'. (See Transport Statement, Appendix C).
- 4) Therefore, we suggest that suitable signage stating 'To Bradon Soft Fruit Farm' and 'No access to Bradon Soft Fruit Farm' be erected in the appropriate places at the applicant's expense. At present, the existing directional signs state 'Bradon Nursery' or 'Bradon Farm', which is confusing. Isle Abbotts Parish Council would be happy to offer assistance in suggesting where the appropriate signs could be placed and feel that this would, hopefully, alleviate long vehicles entering the village.

Isle Brewers Village Meeting: The following comments were made:

Flood Risk Assessment

Residual Risk 4.67-70.

Concern was expressed about the condition of the ditch to the south of the site and the small bore of the pipe under Brandon Lane. It was felt that this should be enlarged to a 1 metre culvert to enable the site water to drain towards the Isle River and reduce the risk of Brandon Lane overtopping and causing flooding within the Village of Isle Brewers. In addition it was felt that the additional lagoons proposed on the site may potentially propose a similar Risk. A view was expressed that the applicants should make an insurance provision for cover for the Village if the lagoons should fail and cause inundation of properties within Isle Brewers.

It was also felt that an independent flood risk assessment should be carried out.

Transport Statement

Concern was expressed that the potential for HGV traffic with the Village of Isle Brewers north of the proposed site might result if insufficient signage was in place. Entry to the site area is proposed to always come from the South via the B3168 (para. 2.5-2.8) but on a number of occasions HGVs have attempted to come from the A378 via Fivehead. When entry to Isle Brewers from the North is attempted HGVs have either become jammed on the narrow bridges over The River Isle and Mill Stream, or have caused considerable damage to the structure of the bridges.

This is implied at para 4.18. Additional informative signage should be erected in Fivehead immediately to the East of Isle Moor Works to minimise this risk. This request is echoed in Appendix C in a letter from Somerset County Council.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

A view was expressed by a number of residents that no further light pollution should be created from the site as the use of artificial lighting in the late winter and early spring at night is already a source of annoyance.

The site is already agricultural land and it is assumed that this application is not for any change in that designation.

County Highway Authority: The submitted planning application form indicates that no new access to the public highway is proposed and the existing access to Braden Farm will be used. It is unlikely that the proposed Polytunnels will generate a significant level of additional traffic movements, as is demonstrated in the submitted Transport Statement.

It is important for the applicant to note that any works carried out within an ordinary watercourse which involves the alteration of flow, whether permanently or temporarily, without obtaining land drainage consent from us (SCC's Flood Risk Management Team) is an offence under the Land Drainage Act. If this is the case, we will under no circumstances issue retrospective consent for these works. If there are any design defects with the structure/s and consequently this causes a nuisance to others, flood risk to properties etc, we will request that the owner of the structure restores these watercourses to their original conditions, even if it is Somerset Highways.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Highway Authority do not wish to raise any objection to this planning application.

SSDC Highway Consultant: Refer to SCC comments.

Health and Safety Executive: Does not advise against, on safety grounds, the granting of planning permission.

Wales and West Utilities: No objection, however note that their apparatus running under the site may be at risk during any construction works. Should planning permission be granted, the developer would need to consult Wales and West to Utilities to discuss their requirements.

SSDC Ecologist: No objection. The Ecological Assessment (Tyler Grange, July 2018) is satisfactory and didn't identify any significant constraints. It is noted that, whilst great crested newt were considered likely to be absent from the site, due to their presence nearby, there's a small risk of presence and harm from the proposed works. As such, a precautionary working method statement is recommended, as are precautionary measures in respect of reptiles. A condition is requested to this effect.

Lead Local Flood Authority: No objection to the proposed drainage strategy, subject to the imposition of a condition relating to the agreement of the final surface water drainage scheme.

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of objection has been received from a resident of Isle Brewers. The objections relate to an increase in traffic through the village, and the potential for increased risk of flooding.

CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

The application relates to a well-established soft fruit farm business that has been producing strawberries since 2016, having previously grown peppers. The proposal seeks to provide new large-scale polytunnels to allow the extension of the growing period through April to October. There are currently two growing seasons, between March to June, and September to December. The business currently employs 45 full time workers and 80 seasonal pickers. The proposed polytunnels would allow the production of approximately 1050 additional tonnes of soft fruit, which would be handled in the existing facilities within the existing buildings on land to the north. It is expected that the business expansion would create 4-5 new permanent jobs, and 25 temporary seasonal roles during picking times.

Overall, the principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable, supporting this existing business, and the local rural economy, however particular consideration will need to be given to the impact on local landscape, highway safety, and impact on local flooding, amongst other relevant considerations.

Scale and Appearance

The proposed polytunnels are sizeable structures, covering a floor area of 4.37 hectares. They will be aluminium frames covered in polythene, to a height of 4m and would be arranged into seven blocks of varying size, around an existing reservoir, and proposed attenuation ponds.

Despite the size of the proposed development, it is noted that the site is relatively well screened with limited views from wider public vantage points. There is existing mature hedge and tree planting around the site. Notwithstanding the above, the site will be seen in context with the larger permanent greenhouses to the north, to which these will be closely related. It is also important to note that the polythene sheeting is proposed to be removed outside of the growing season, and the polytunnels would be easily removable if no longer required in the future, meaning that these elements of the scheme are reversible. The applicant has also confirmed that no internal lighting is proposed for the polytunnels, addressing concerns expressed in respect to potential impact on local landscape character.

Overall, the proposal is considered to appropriately respect and relate to the existing site and surrounding area, having no unacceptable impact on local landscape character, particularly when weighed against the benefits to the local economy through the expansion of this enterprise.

Highway Safety

Some concerns have been raised about the potential increase in vehicle movements on the local road network, which is narrow and windy at certain points. The application is supported which notes a planning condition imposed on the last permission to expand the business. This was for the expansion of the existing glasshouses under permission 07/01258/FUL. The condition in question limits traffic movements to and from the site to no more than 447 HGV lorry movements and 300 van movements. Since this condition was imposed, there has been a significant drop in vehicle movements as a result of the switch from pepper to strawberry production. There was previously a drop in traffic movements following an earlier change from tomato to pepper production in 2002. Daily vehicle movements to the site would be similar to those experienced during the existing growing periods (approximately 2 HGV and 16 minibus/car movements). In total, it is predicted that vehicle movements following grant of this permission would equate to approximately 468 HGV movements per year, which is a slight increase of about 5% over existing. While the grant of this permission does not directly impact on the requirements of this condition, an informative will be imposed suggesting that a separate application is made to formally vary the existing condition to correspondent with the proposed development should permission be granted, to avoid the applicant being in breach of this condition.

The Highway Authority has considered the proposal, and on the basis of the information contained within the transport statement do not object on the basis that the likely vehicle movements would not lead to a significant level of additional traffic movements.

Comments have been made by the local Parish Councils in respect to providing additional directional signage to assist with occasional wrong turns from HGV drivers. This is noted, and while not considered appropriate to make a requirement of any planning permission, reference to this will be made in an informative.

Drainage

The site is within flood zone 1, however it is there are flood zones 2 and 3 close to the site, and there are well-known localised surface water issues in the wider area. The application is supported by a flood risk assessment and a detailed drainage strategy that includes the provision of four attenuation ponds within the site, which will store any additional surface water runoff and allow controlled flow into an adjoining watercourse at greenfield rates.

The strategy has been considered by the Lead Local Flood Authority, and is considered acceptable. It is therefore considered that the proposal will not lead to an increase in flood risk locally. A condition will be imposed for the approval of the final drainage scheme.

Ecology

A submitted ecological assessment did not identify any constraints to the development, although it is noted that there have been Greater Crested Newt populations identified nearby, even though none were identified within the site. The Council's Ecologist supports the findings and recommendations of the ecological assessment, with a condition requested to require precautionary measures to be taken when carrying out the development, in case amphibians or reptiles are found on the site. These precautionary measures are proposed within the submitted ecological assessment, and will be conditioned accordingly.

Residential Amenity

The scheme is not considered to have any adverse impact on the occupiers of local residents, being located at distance from any residential properties. Due to the limited increase in vehicle movements associated with the proposal, it is also not considered that there would be any unacceptable increase in harm to local residents on the road network approaching the site.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle, supporting the continued running, and expansion, of an established business, and contributing to the local economy, without adversely impacting on character of the surrounding area, residential amenity and highway safety, or increasing the risk of localised flooding.

RECOMMENDATION

Approval with conditions

01. The proposed development, by reason of size, scale and materials, is acceptable as it respects the character of the site and its surroundings and has no detrimental impact on highway safety or residential amenity, and would not lead to an increase in local flood risk. As such, the proposed development is considered to accord with the aims and objectives of policies SD1, TA5, EQ2 and EQ7 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the following approved plans: '8267-100 Revision B', '8267-200', '8267-201 Revision D' and '8267-300'.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning, and in the interests of visual amenity, in accordance policies SD1, EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

03. No work shall commence on site until a surface water drainage scheme based in sustainable drainage principles (including highways drainage), and land drainage scheme for the site, together with a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall be permanently retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with policies EQ1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006/2028) and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

04. Site clearance and preparation works shall be undertaken in accordance with a Precautionary Working Method Statement for great crested newts and reptiles, in line with details indicated within the submitted Ecological Assessment (Report Number 11307_R03a_AH_MM, dated 27th July 2018).

Reason: To ensure compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and for the avoidance of harm to legally protected species, in accordance with Local Plan policy EQ4 and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

05. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no internal or external illumination/lighting shall be installed or provided on the land or within the polytunnels hereby permitted, without the prior express grant of planning permission.

Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity, in accordance with policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives:

01. The applicant is reminded of the comments of Wales and West Utilities, in their letter dated 6th November 2018, which is available on the Council's website. This reminds the applicant of their obligations in respect works near to gas pipes, and the need to obtain relevant consent, where necessary.
02. The applicant is reminded of the comments of the Highway Authority within their letter dated 19th November 2018, which is available on the Council's website. This reminds the applicant of their obligations in respect to carrying out works within an ordinary watercourse, and the need to obtain Land Drainage Consent, where necessary.
03. The applicant is advised that it would be appropriate to seek to amend condition 3 (traffic movements) of planning permission 07/01258/FUL, to correspond with the predicted increase in vehicle movements associated with the development hereby permitted, and to avoid being in

breach of the condition.

04. The applicant is asked to note the comments of Isle Abbots Parish Council, and Isle Brewers Village Meeting, in respect to consideration being given to reviewing and updating existing directional signs on the roads approaching the application site.
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