

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
Mr. M. Turan 'A'	Retrospective application for the creation of access track for agricultural machinery - Belcote Farm, Mearse Lane, Belbroughton	Green Belt	B/2007/1094 23.11.2007

RECOMMENDATION: that the power to determine the application be delegated to the Head of Planning and Environment Services upon the expiry of the publicity period on 6th November 2007 (minded to refuse).

Consultations

Belbroughton PC	Consulted: 01.10.2007. No response.
WCC(HP)	Consulted: 01.10.2007. No response.
ENG	Consulted: 01.10.2007. No response.
Publicity	Site notice posted: 16.10.2007 (expires: 06.11.2007). No response to date.

The site and its surroundings

This application site refers to a plot of land which is located in a designated Green Belt area and forms a retrospective hard-standing access point with a prominent kerb on either side of the track which runs from Mearse Lane to a retrospective agricultural building (also to be considered at this Committee meeting).

Proposal

This is a retrospective application for the creation of an access track for agricultural machinery. The access track would measure approximately 4.5 metres in width with an approximate length of 65 metres from Mearse Lane until the first bend to the right where the track would extend for a further distance of approximately 95 metres to the retrospective agricultural building.

Relevant Policies

WMSS	QE3
WCSP	CTC.1, D.38, D.39
BDLP	DS13, DS2
Others	PPS1, PPG2, PPS7

Relevant Planning History

B/2007/0691	Erection of agricultural storage building for machinery and fodder - Retrospective. Pending.
B/2007/1092	Retrospective application for the creation of hard-standing yard area adjacent to building for agricultural purposes. Pending.
B/2006/0332	Erection of an Agricultural storage / general purpose building. Details not required: 27.04.2006

Relevant Planning History (cont'd)

- B/2006/0148 Erection of an agricultural storage / general purpose building - Agricultural notification. Further details required: 17.03.2006
- B/2005/0964 Change of access into field for agricultural purposes (as amended by certificate received 03.11.2005). Granted: 25.11.2005
- B/2001/0281 Erection of detached garage. Granted: 30.04.2001

Notes

The main issue to take into consideration is whether the proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, if so, whether any 'very special circumstances' exist to clearly outweigh the harm caused.

New access track and Green Belt Policy

Policy DS2 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan sets out the instances where development is considered appropriate in the Green Belt as stemming from PPG2 and reflects paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of PPG2.

Paragraph 3.12 of PPG2 states that engineering operations and the making of material changes in the use of land are inappropriate development unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The purposes of including land in the Green Belt include checking unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, as set out in paragraph 1.5 of PPG2.

It is acknowledged that the track itself does not damage the openness of the Green Belt but the laying of hard-standing to form a permanent and established driveway over the former rudimentary agricultural farm track would lead to further encroachment on the countryside and Green Belt by urbanising a substantial part of the existing field. By definition, this would unduly harm the visual amenity of the Green Belt as defined in paragraph 3.15 of PPG2, and would conflict with the purposes and provisions of including land within the Green Belt, contrary to the advice in paragraph 1.5 of PPG2. Therefore, it will be necessary to establish whether any 'very special circumstances' exist to outweigh the harm caused.

Supporting statement from the Agent (in summary)

A supporting statement was received from the Agent concerned on 28th September 2007 to substantiate this case:

The access track is required for the delivery and collection of grain and straw and there was a previous hard standing farm track in place across the field which served the farm and evidence of this has been submitted in the form of aerial photographs. Therefore this was the most sensible option to route the track.

Planning permission (B/2005/0964) was granted for the movement of the existing field gate.

A more direct route is not possible due to wet lying land which would provide a difficult means of access for farm vehicles during the Autumn and Winter period.

The construction of the track was also influenced by the location of the mains WM1212 Hagley to Weights Lane, 24-bar high pressure gas pipe line which crosses underneath the track adjacent to the entrance into field no. 8870. Therefore a sufficient depth and hard surface covering must be implemented for vehicles passing over the pipe line.

The kerb stone edging is to protect and discourage encroachment of weeds into the track.

The track will be fenced off on both sides and there will be a large hedge planted along the sides of the track for screening purposes and the field gate will be locked for security purposes.

The land at Belcote Farm is currently under going conversion from pasture land into arable land and this track will be essential for the movement of agricultural vehicles and machinery.

The Council acknowledges the circumstances submitted by the Agent concerned. However, the Council does not consider these to be 'very special circumstances' which would clearly outweigh the harm caused to the visual amenity of the Green Belt. Therefore, by definition, the proposal would lead to an unnecessary urbanising impact on the surrounding rural setting which would clearly prejudice the purposes and provisions of including land within the designated Green Belt area.

RECOMMENDATION: that the power to determine the application be delegated to the Head of Planning and Environment Services upon the expiry of the publicity period on 6th November 2007 (minded to refuse).