P/2019/00552

Land off Scotch Hills Lane, Newchurch, Staffordshire

Erection of an agricultural workers dwelling and detached garage

SK157214

The application form states that the site area is 0.1 hectares, but the red line boundary shown on the  Site Location Plan 1438M Dwg no. 05 Dated May 2019 is more than this- the area for the dwelling itself is at least 0.35 ha.

No cross-sections of the proposed graded bank have been provided to show how the landform would be changed.

The access track shown on the Site Location Plan show a different route to the already consented access track, once this leaves the wood pasture to the north. This will impact on further areas of grassland, as well as cutting through an additional section of the tree belt. Could the track not follow the existing access?

The proposed site is within 60m of a registered ancient woodland, and directly adjacent to part of Yoxall Park and Brankley Covert Local Wildlife Site, which SWT owns and manages as a publicly accessible nature reserve.

The buildings would be very close to our nature reserve, and disrupt views across the valley, which have until now had no buildings visible. The consented buildings are somewhat to the side behind the adjacent woodland, but the proposed dwelling would be directly adjacent to our boundary and impact on the open parkland landscape. We would prefer the buildings to be located further to the west, or to the north of the tree belt, where they would be less visible, would not block views and would be better incorporated with surrounding vegetation.

As the proposals would mean loss of further grassland for the access track and buildings, the landscaping will need to mitigate for this. We would advise that an area at least half the size of the grassland lost should be provided as enhanced habitat. Proposed woodland planting, if using locally native trees/ shrubs and undersown with suitable ground flora would serve to compensate for the loss of grassland. However, most of the woodland planting shown on the plans is, we understand, planned to be planted anyway through a National Forest grant, so this cannot be counted as habitat compensation that is an obligation for planning mitigation. For woodland or parkland habitat creation, we strongly recommend that subsoil is used, either with pits of topsoil for trees, or a layer of subsoil is spread over topsoil in planted areas to enable a diverse ground sward to be established and reduce the need for weed control. The details of tree planting/ habitat creation would need to be conditioned.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust submit a holding objection at this time due to landscape impacts.