

Application No: W 11 / 1049

Town/Parish Council: Lapworth

Case Officer: Liam D'Onofrio

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Registration Date: 17/08/11

Expiry Date: 12/10/11

Packwood House, Packwood Lane, Lapworth, Solihull, B94 6AT

Improvements to visitor facilities and related development, comprising: a new visitor reception building; alterations to the visitor route, including alterations to listed buildings; car park improvements; and alterations to access including creation of new road accesses FOR National Trust

Departure from Development Plan

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Lapworth Parish Council: No Objection

Environment Agency: No objection

WCC (Highways): No objection, subject to access and visibility conditions

Conservation: Comment that there have been significant pre-application discussions regarding siting, and that the existing visitor facilities are very limited. Conservation consider that the proposed routing of the public will provide a better and safer approach and that the proposed building has been designed with a series of small scale pitched roofs and will be partially screened by existing planting. They also note that the materials proposed are acceptable.

WCC (Ecology): Recommend a tree protection condition + bat, badger, and nesting bird notes.

WCC (Archaeology): Recommend a written scheme of investigation condition.

English Heritage: Have only commented on the listed building application W/11/1050, although their comments also relate to planning issues. They consider that detailing must be of the highest standard and provided up front, rather than through condition. There were concerns during original discussions with the changes to the courtyard to achieve the required circulation, and English Heritage state that they remain a little concerned at this aspect but have not objected. English Heritage have requested that wall boarding should be untreated oak; and that the tiles should be handmade to match the existing, to which the applicant has agreed in writing.

Baddesley Clinton Parish Council: Support (Comment)

Jeremy Wright MP: Support

Public response: A petition with 4590 signatures has been received stating: "We support the National Trust's plans to create modern visitor facilities at Packwood House. We believe that the Trust's plans will greatly improve the

experience for visitors, as well as providing local employment opportunities and helping the Trust to generate income to look after Packwood. We urge the Council to approve the scheme."

91 individual supporting letters have been received largely reflecting those supporting comments made in the submitted petition.

One comment received stating that Packwood needs better visitor facilities, however given the outstandingly attractive location the proposed building would harm the location to some extent.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- DP11 - Drainage (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP12 - Energy Efficiency (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP13 - Renewable Energy Developments (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP15 - Accessibility and Inclusion (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- RAP11 - Rural Shops and Services (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- National Planning Policy Framework
- DP6 - Access (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP4 - Archaeology (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Sustainable Buildings (Supplementary Planning Document - December 2008)
- National Planning Policy Framework
- DP8 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP11 - Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP4 - Protection of Listed Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)

PLANNING HISTORY

W/09/0610 and 0611LB New garden machinery store: Granted 22nd December 2009

KEY ISSUES

The Site and its Location

The site relates to Packwood House, a substantial country house (Grade I listed) in substantial grounds (Grade II* on the English Heritage Register) located within the Green Belt near Lapworth/Kingswood. The application site is located on the eastern side of Packwood Lane, on the opposite side of the road to the main house, where the existing car park and Grade II listed outbuildings are located.

Details of the Development

Planning permission is sought to erect a detached building to provide a visitor centre with 92 cover restaurant, and to construct additional parking and a

pedestrian access route (which involves the insertion of an access gate within a listed wall considered under W11/1050/LB).

The proposed building will measure 18.7 metres by 23.5 metres, with a 4 metre by 4.7 metre porch canopy to the west entrance and a 6.1 metre by 2 metre porch canopy to the south entrance. The main roof over the building will have an eaves height of 2.2 metres and ridge height of 5.3 metres. Full-time equivalent employees will be increased from 12 to 22.

The application is accompanied by a supporting Design and Access Statement (incorporating heritage and planning issues), a Sustainability Statement, a materials report, an ecology survey and a tree survey.

Assessment

The main factors relevant to the consideration of this application are as follows:

- The principle for development within the Green Belt and whether any very special circumstances exist;
- The siting and design of the proposed development;
- Sustainability; and
- Ecology and landscaping matters.

Green Belt/Very special circumstances

The proposed construction of a new visitor centre and associated hardstanding parking areas in the adjoining upper and lower fields represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The National Policy Planning Framework April 2012 advises in Section 9. Protecting Green Belt land that: "as with previous Green Belt policy [PPG2] inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

The harm to the Green Belt in this case relates to the additional built form of the visitor centre and car park hardstanding and the subsequent loss of openness. This is considered in greater detail within the design and siting section of this report. The onus is upon the applicant to identify very special circumstances and the applicant has submitted the following supporting information to justify the proposed development.

In terms of the needs of visitors the applicant states that Packwood welcomed 85,000 visitors in 2011, however the current visitor facilities are woefully inadequate and the visitors main 'grumble' was the lack of cafe facilities, which is considered to be a basic expectation of visitors to National Trust properties. In addition the applicant advises that the existing visitor reception and shop are awkward, badly located spaces that are not very accessible and far too small for existing visitor numbers. There are not enough toilets and the kitchen garden and parkland walks are considered to feel disjointed and not part of the whole visit. The applicant indicates that the proposed scheme seeks to resolve these issues by providing an enticing, purpose-built cafe, a shop and welcome space to encourage a longer dwell time and a pleasant starting point from which to visit the house, gardens and parkland. Packwood is a relatively compact property

and the improved facilities also aim to better spread visitors more evenly across the site.

In terms of finances the applicant advises that Packwood is not a 'wealthy' property and relies on being able to generate its own income in order to finance conservation work. The applicant states that at Packwood over the last three years £472,000 has been invested in essential maintenance and conservation projects, which includes re-roofing, re-wiring the mansion, removal of asbestos and installation of new fire and security systems. This level of investment will be required in future years for the continuation of electrical re-wiring and completion of the installation of fire and security systems, essential maintenance and the reconstruction of the historic causeway (with estimated £100,000 repair costs) and conservation of Packwood's 25 nationally important tapestries (estimates at up to £100,000 each). The proposed visitor centre will significantly improve the property's ability to generate income to continue with the major conservation projects on site.

The key very special circumstances presented in this case are therefore the National Trust's desire to "create fresh and inspiring new facilities at Packwood that will significantly enhance and augment visitors' enjoyment, as well as generating income to support the property's conservation work."

In terms of overall floorspace proposed the applicant has indicated that the proposed facilities are based on existing visitor numbers. The applicant anticipates an increase in annual visitor numbers with the proposed move to 364-day opening once the visitor centre is complete, but the most important factor affecting the size of the proposed building is the daily number of visitors. The applicant advises that although demand will exceed the proposed capacity of the building on peak days this will be at a manageable level comparable with other National Trust properties.

The applicant has confirmed that the primary purpose of the new visitor centre is to serve people visiting the heritage property and to enhance their enjoyment of the visit. All visitors to the cafe will have to pass through the visitor reception and either have to pay to enter the property or show a National Trust membership card. The building will clearly be ancillary to the house and gardens rather than creating a separate attraction.

In terms of car parking the applicant notes that the improved visitor facilities would have some impact on parking by encouraging visitors to stay longer and so marginally reducing the potential turnover of parking spaces. The proposed development includes a slight increase in parking from 240 to 250 spaces, with provision made for access to a neighbouring field for occasional overflow use.

Establishing very special circumstances involves a balancing exercise for the Local Planning Authority. On one side is the extent of the harm to the Green Belt by virtue of inappropriateness and any other factors and on the other side are any positive advantages to the proposal. The NPPF Section 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment advises that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. It is considered that the applicant has demonstrated that the proposed visitor centre's scale, design and location and the use of materials on the building and within car park area/pathways have been carefully considered to ensure that their impact upon the openness of the Green Belt is minimised. The application site relates to a unique Grade 1 listed building of national importance and the proposed development seeks to improve

both visitor facilities and generate income to support continued conservation work at the property and encourage local tourism. The proposals are therefore considered to amount to very special circumstances to outweigh harm to openness and justify the development within the Green Belt.

Design/Siting

The proposed building will have a large rectangular footprint; however the form of the building will be appropriately broken up by a series of valleys and ridges within the roof, significantly reducing the mass of the building and creating a well proportioned, low-rise structure. The resulting linked gable-ends will create an acceptable rhythm to the building, which is reflective of the existing buildings and echoes the gable features to the main house. The chimney detail has been modelled on the chimney at the coach house. The building's design has been agreed by the National Trust's Architectural Panel and English Heritage and the Council's Conservation Officer have raised no objection to the scheme. The proposal is not therefore considered to contravene Local Plan Policy DAP4, which states that development should not adversely affect setting of listed building.

In terms of materials the proposed building will be clad in horizontal oak boarding, set upon a low red brickwork plinth and the roof will have red clay tiles matching tiles on adjacent buildings. The oak boarding will be naturally finished and the roof tiles have been amended from machine made tiles to handmade tiles to address English Heritage's comments. These handmade tiles will provide a more irregular and rustic appearance to the roof. Black-framed conservation rooflights will be located to the inner roof planes of the building limiting their visibility. The design and use of materials will provide a utilitarian character, which is considered appropriate to the building's setting within the existing courtyard of service buildings. The building has not sought to mimic the adjacent historic buildings and will also utilise contemporary elements such as powder coated aluminium window and door frames, which is considered appropriate to avoid creating a contrived design solution.

The building will be located within an unobtrusive position set back 50 metres from Packwood Lane and partly screened by existing barn buildings, set closer to the highway. The land slopes gently to the northwest and the building will be largely screened from view by higher land levels and mature landscaping when viewed from the south. The building will be visible from across the upper and lower fields where viewed from Packwood Lane to the north, however the building will be read within the context of the existing building group on this side of the highway and viewed against the backdrop of higher land and mature landscaping to the south, which will assist with the building's assimilation into the landscape.

Landscaping/Ecology

There are a number of minor landscaping alterations proposed, including a new all-weather bonded gravel path which will take visitors around the southern side of the Kitchen Garden, down a new ramped cutting and through a gate inserted within a boundary wall, providing vistas of the principle elevation of the main house and creating a safer single crossing point over the highway and avoiding the need for visitors to walk along the narrow Packwood Lane, which is the current situation. The return route will be from the northern side of the main house, crossing the highway into the existing courtyard, which will be divided by gloss black metal railings. The railings have been altered from an urban style with vertical bars set on a dwarf wall to the more appropriate estate railing with

horizontal bars, reflecting existing railings within the property's gardens. The dwarf wall would have created a solid barrier and removing this element will create a more open barrier to control pedestrian circulation, better respecting English Heritage's reservations regarding the changes to the courtyard.

The car parking areas will be improved for all weather use with a mix of reinforced units of gravel infill and turf infill parking bays and a bonded brown gravel circulation area with a new access created to Packwood Lane. The eastern boundary of the car park will be re-aligned and formed with a native hedgerow and additional tree planting. Low level lighting will be used within the upper field only for way of guidance only. The use of 'softer' bonded gravel hardstanding materials and breaking up of hardstanding areas with planting and turf parking bays are considered to be appropriate, reducing the overall visual impact. These hardstanding areas are not permeable; however there is suitable scope for surface water to run-off into the permeable grass borders within the car park. The Environment Agency notes that the site is only located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore consider that any flood risk from surface water is negligible. The Highway Engineer has raised no objection to the layout of the car park or new access, subject to conditions.

The Ecologist has raised no objections to the scheme subject to tree protection condition. The development will provide an appropriate soft and hard landscaping scheme, which can be controlled by condition.

Sustainability

To meet the renewable energy requirement of 10% set within the Sustainable Buildings SPD a biomass wood pellet boiler is proposed to offset the proposed building's hot water and heating use. The biomass boiler is considered by the applicant to be the most feasible of the renewable technologies and is predicted to provide 27.4% renewable energy technology.

The scheme will also include rainwater harvesting system and waste food composting. The car park will have electric charging points for electric powered cars.

Recommendation

Grant, subject to the conditions and for the reasons listed below:

CONDITIONS

The site is situated within the Green Belt and the NPPF 2012 seeks to retain and protect the openness and permanence of the Green Belt. It also contains a general presumption against "inappropriate" development in Green Belt areas and lists specific forms of development which can be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The proposed development does not fall within any of the categories listed in the Guidance, however in the Planning Authority's view, very special circumstances sufficient to justify departing from this Guidance have been demonstrated.

- 1 The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. **REASON :** To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990,

as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 Samples of all external facing materials to be used for the construction of the visitor centre building hereby permitted, shall be submitted to and approved by the District Planning Authority before any construction works are commenced. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. **REASON** : To ensure that the visual amenities of the area are protected, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DAP4 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 3 The low level lighting bollards identified on Drg No.516-01-01 Rev K shall not be erected unless and until detailed design plans have been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. Thereafter the approved lighting shall only operate during those hours where the site is open to members of the visiting public. **REASON** : In the interests of minimising the effect of the lights and to ensure that the visual amenities of the area are protected, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DAP4 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 4 The car park hereby permitted shall be constructed, surfaced, laid out and available for use prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, in full accordance with the approved plan. **REASON** : To ensure that adequate parking facilities are available, in accordance with the requirements of Policy DP8 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011.
- 5 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be commenced and nor shall any equipment, machinery or materials be brought onto the site until a scheme for the protection of all existing trees and hedges to be retained on site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority and has been put in place. The scheme must include details of the erection of stout protective fencing and be in accordance with British Standard BS5837: 2005, Trees in Relation to Construction. Nothing shall be stored or placed in those areas fenced in accordance with this condition and nor shall the grounds levels be altered or any excavation take place without the prior consent in writing of the District Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be kept in place until all parts of the development have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed. **REASON** : To protect and enhance the amenities of the area, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 6 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. **REASON**: To ensure adequate opportunity for site research and recording in accordance with Policy DP4 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 7 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown within the approved drawings, documentation and specifications contained therein, unless first agreed

otherwise in writing by the District Planning Authority. **REASON** : For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DAP4, DP1 and DP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

- 8 The landscaping scheme submitted as part of the application hereby permitted shall be completed, in all respects, not later than the first planting season following the completion of the development hereby permitted. Any trees removed, dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting shall be replaced by trees of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted. **REASON** : To protect and enhance the amenities of the area, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 9 The vehicle accesses should be located in accordance with the approved drawing number 516-01-01 Rev K. **Reason:** To ensure a satisfactory access in the interests of road safety in accordance with Policy DP6 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 10 The accesses to the site for vehicles shall not be used unless a public highway verge crossing has been laid out and constructed in accordance with the standard specification of the Highway Authority, with the access being provided being not less than 3 metres in width. **Reason:** In the interests of road safety and to accord with Policy DP6 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 11 The access shall not be used until visibility splays have been provided to the vehicular accesses to the site [passing through the limits of the site fronting the public highway] with an 'x' distance of 2.4 metres and 'y' distances of 215 metres to the near edge of the public highway carriageway. No structure, tree or shrub shall be erected, planted or retained within the splays exceeding, or likely to exceed at maturity, a height of 0.6 metres above the level of the public highway carriageway. **Reason:** In the interests of road safety to accord with Policy DP6 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 12 The existing and proposed accesses to the site for vehicles shall not be used in connection with the development [hereby permitted] until they have been surfaced with a bound material for a distance of 5 metres as measured from the near edge of the public highway carriageway] in accordance with details to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [in consultation with the Highway Authority]. **Reason:** In the interests of highway safety in accordance with DP6 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 13 Gates erected at the entrances to the site for vehicles shall not be hung so as to open to within 5 metres of the near edge of the public highway carriageway. **Reason:** In the interests of road safety and to accord with Policy DP6 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

INFORMATIVES

For the purposes of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, the following reason(s) for the Council's decision are summarised below:
