

Dear Members

Special Planning Committee (Large Scale Major Application)

A special meeting of the Planning Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** on **Thursday 24 November 2022** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

The Committee will meet at the rear of the Civic Centre and depart at **9.30 am** to visit the site(s) as set out in the agenda and re-convene at the Civic Centre at approximately **11.00 am** to determine the application(s).

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown in each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Administration

**SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
(LARGE SCALE MAJOR APPLICATION)
24 NOVEMBER 2022**

Chairman - Councillor E G R Jones

Vice-Chairman - Councillor P W Jones

AGENDA

1	Apologies	
2	Declaration of Member's Interests/Lobbying	
3	Planning Applications	Page Nos 3 - 36

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman - Councillor E G R Jones

F Beatty	P W Jones
A G Cooper	B McKeown
A P Edgeller	A Nixon
A D Hobbs	G P K Pardesi
J Hood	C V Trowbridge
E G R Jones	

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE - 24 NOVEMBER 2022

Ward Interest - Nil

Planning Applications

Report of Head of Development

Purpose of Report

To consider the following planning applications, the reports for which are set out in the attached **APPENDIX**:-

		Page Nos
20/32222/FUL	Land West of Stallbrook Hall, Crossing Lane Derrington	4 - 36
	<p>This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the development is a large scale major application</p> <p>Officer Contact - Richard Wood, Development Lead Telephone 01785 619324</p>	

Previous Consideration

Nil

Background Papers

Planning application files are available for Members to inspect, by prior arrangement, in the Development Management Section. The applications including the background papers, information and correspondence received during the consideration of the application, consultation replies, neighbour representations are scanned and are available to view on the Council website.

Application: 20/32222/FUL

Case Officer: Vanessa Blake

Date Registered: 7 April 2020

Target Decision Date: 7 July 2020

Extended To: -

Address: Land West of Stallbrook Hall, Crossing Lane, Derrington, Stafford, Staffordshire

Ward: Seighford and Church Eaton

Parish: Seighford

Proposal: Polyhouses and ground source heat recovery for the production of soft fruit on a permanent basis (partially retrospective)

Applicant: A J Busby Ltd

Recommendation: Approve, subject to conditions

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The planning application is a large scale major development and as such is excluded from the Council's scheme of delegation and therefore requires determination by the Planning Committee.

The application has also been called in by Councillor M J Winnington (Ward Member for Seighford and Church Eaton) for the following reasons:-

"I wish to call this application in to allow the Planning committee to discuss the impact on landscape and local flooding issues".

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 Planning permission was originally granted in 2011 under 09/12265/FUL to retain 'Spanish Style' polytunnels on land at Billington Farm. Billington Farm comprises 243 hectares (ha) with the land around the main farm complex making up the bulk of the land together with two smaller separate areas at Coton Clanford and land adjacent to Stallbrook Hall. The latter being the site the subject of this application.
- 1.2 Planning permission 09/12265/FUL approved a total of 47.5 ha of land to be covered in polytunnels.

- 1.3 A further 4 hectares for polytunnel coverage were then added under planning permission 12/18118/FUL totalling 51.5 hectares. Both permissions require the rotational coverage after 2016 to be in accordance with details shown on the rotational coverage plan for the year 2016.
- 1.4 The rotational coverage plan for 2016 shows land adjacent to Stallbrook Hall, the subject land of this application, for growing blueberries with no polytunnel coverage in any year.
- 1.5 The applicant also states that a further 6 hectares of land are also covered by polytunnels but which are exempt from planning permission with being established pre-1996.
- 1.6 It is now proposed to erect polyhouses, not polytunnels, and a ground source heat recovery system on the land adjacent to Stallbrook Hall for the growing of soft fruit on a permanent basis.
- 1.7 Additionally, following concerns from Historic England certain fields around the main farm complex are excluded from any polytunnel coverage in order to protect the immediate setting of the scheduled monuments at Berry Ring, a moat and enclosure to the south and Stafford Castle beyond the motorway to the northeast. The excluded areas correspond to the 2016 rotational plan where no polytunnels are shown.

Site and surroundings

- 1.8 The application form states that the site covers 18.7 ha and comprises open agricultural land containing a number of trees within and around its boundaries. Land levels generally fall in a north easterly direction.
- 1.9 The site is bounded to the north by a disused railway line (The Way for the Millennium), whilst to the northeast are residential properties, including the Grade II Listed Stallbrook Hall. To the east and southeast the site abuts open fields with the southwestern portion extending up to land covered with polytunnels at the adjacent Dearnsdale Farm. Further to the west and southwest extends the agricultural holding of Dearnsdale Farm with land covered with polytunnels
- 1.10 Access to the site is shown via an existing track to the northeast corner from Crossing Lane. The first part of the access track from Crossing Lane forms Public Right of Way (PROW) bridleway Seighford 1. Whilst the access track continues to the east, Seighford 1 follows the shared driveway to the cluster of residential properties around Stallbrook Hall in a southeast direction before entering the site further to the south and continuing in a southern direction.

Proposal

- 1.11 The proposal involves the installation of a phased installation of three hectares of polyhouses and approximately 8 hectares for a ground source heat recovery system (GSHRS), together with an associated plant and machinery building, water management silos and an attenuation pond.

- 1.12 The submitted Design and Access Statement states that the polyhouses and GSHRS would allow plants to be started in mid-December for cropping around 10 April through to the end of May. Plants will be started in August to provide crops through to the end of November effectively lengthening strawberry production by six weeks. Grass, grain or blueberries would also be grown on raised beds on land over GSHRS pipework array.
- 1.13 The GSHRS would be located within the eastern portion of the site and extending across virtually the whole width of the site. The GSHRS pipework would be 1.2m below ground level. Below the northern portion of the GSHRS there would be a drainage detention basin. Further to the east a planting belt would extend across the whole width of the site forming a landscaped buffer to residential properties at Stallbrook.
- 1.14 The polyhouses would occupy the western portion of the site forming two rectangular shaped areas each subdivided into two further blocks measuring 180m x 57.6m (phases 1 and 3) and 180m x 48m (phases 2 and 4). The polyhouses would be aligned in a southwest / northeast direction.
- 1.15 The two water management silos would be located in between the northern block of polyhouses (phases 1 and 2) and the GSHRS, whilst the machinery building would be attached to the southeast corner of the polyhouses forming phase 1.
- 1.16 The applicant has submitted an Operational and Economic Statement dated November 2017 and is the same as that which supports application 17/27543/FUL for soft fruit production under polytunnels across Billington Farm and which is yet to be determined. The statement sets out, amongst other things, the background to soft fruit production at Billington Farm with Spanish style polytunnels, staff/labour numbers and at the date of publication that Billington and Stallbrook, excluding the Coton Clanford site, accounted for 98% of the business turnover.
- 1.17 The proposal is also supported by the following technical documents which are referred to in the relevant subsections below:
- Transport Statement and Routing Plan,
 - Flood Risk Assessment,
 - Supplementary SuDS Information,
 - Acoustic Report and update report,
 - Ecological Report,

 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (March 2021),
 - Visual Impact Schedules,

 - Archaeological Assessment,
 - Geophysical Survey Report,
 - Heritage Impact Assessment,
 - Design and Access Statement.
- 1.18 During the determination of the application the works have been partially completed. The polyhouses in phase 1 and 2 have been completed and the detention basin has started to be dug out.

OFFICER ASSESSMENT - KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) set out that the determination of applications must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan comprises of The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 and The Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 2011-2031.

2. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should enable at (a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through well designed new buildings. Further, at provision (b), the development and diversification of agricultural businesses.
- 2.2 The NPPF at paragraph 174 also states that planning policies and decisions contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and providing net gains for biodiversity. Further to this, it is accepted that paragraph 176 only gives significant support to the need to conserve special, statutorily designated landscapes and the wildlife and cultural heritage within them. Although, the third overarching objective of sustainable development set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF requires, inter alia, a contribution to protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and helping to improve biodiversity.
- 2.3 Spatial Principle (SP) 7 of The Plan for Stafford Borough (PfSB) deals with the location of new development and provisions (ii), (iii) and (iv) set down criteria for development in the countryside outside of the Green Belt. Criterion two requires development to be in accordance with SP6 and policy E2. Criterion three requires the development to not conflict with the environmental protection and nature conservation policies of the plan. Finally, criterion four requires that provision is made for any necessary mitigation or compensatory measures to address any harmful implications.
- 2.4 In turn, SP6 promotes rural sustainability through promoting the rural economy, conservation or improvement of the rural environment and the use of renewable energy sources amongst other objectives.
- 2.5 Supporting sustainable rural development is central policy E2 by encouraging the diversification of the rural economy whilst securing other objectives which include:
- (vi) conserving/improving the rural environment:*
- (d) respecting and protecting the natural landscape and designated heritage assets:*
- (f) being appropriately designed for its purpose, and*
- (g) not being detrimental to the amenity of the area or it is demonstrated that alternative uses are preferable for reasons of heritage interest.*

- 2.6 Support is clearly given to achieving an economically prosperous rural economy at both a national and local level and polyhouses achieve this as a form of agricultural diversification. However, whilst the principle of development may be acceptable in economic terms, the overall acceptability of the proposal needs to be weighed against any potential harmful impacts to the natural and historic value of the landscape, and other material considerations being satisfied.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraph 8 - Overarching objectives

Paragraph 84 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy

Paragraphs 174 and 176 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

Spatial Principle 6 - Achieving Rural Sustainability

Spatial Principle 7 - Supporting the Location of New Development

Policy E2 - Sustainable Rural Development

The Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2:

Spatial Principle 7 - Supporting the Location of New Development

Policy SB1 - Settlement Boundaries

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 3.1 The two rectangular blocks of polyhouses would each consist of a total of 11 lines of adjoining polyhouses. The total ground area covered by each block would be 180m by 105.6m (19,008m²). Each line of polyhouses would measure 4.75m to eaves and 7.3m to the roof apex, with a polythene cover.
- 3.2 The plant and machinery building would measure 20.5m x 10.5m in footprint with an eaves of 4.5m and 6.2m to the ridge of the dual pitched roof. The building would be constructed from smooth white concrete panels to a height of 2m from ground level with profiled Juniper green coloured profiled steel cladding above. The roof would comprise anthracite grey coloured fibre cement sheeting.
- 3.3 The water management silos would be cylindrical in shape with a diameter of 8m. The silos would be 4.6m to eaves with a conical shaped roof to an overall height of 5.85m. No specific materials are specified but a photograph shows the silos having metallic steel sides and a darker grey clad roofing system.
- 3.4 The detention basin would be generally oval in shape with an east to west alignment. Overall dimensions would measure approximately 107m wide by 72m length. The Flood Risk Assessment states that the basin would be 1m deep.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- 3.5 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) assesses the impact of the development on landscape character and the visual amenity of the site and its surroundings.
- 3.6 During the consideration of the application a scheme specific LVIA was submitted. The 2021 LVIA states at paragraph 8.3 and 8.4 that:

“The value of the landscape was identified as being low-medium as the landscape is associated with existing polytunnels, and the land has undergone intensification over many years. The sensitivity of the landscape to this type of development was Low-Medium within the study area. The magnitude of change was identified as being negligible adverse, and the significance of effect of the polyhouses would be negligible-slight adverse.

The site was assessed on the impact on visual amenity and it was determined that the greatest effects would be from within close proximity and within the site. Beyond this the effects would reduce significantly, particularly with regards to context of existing polytunnels, as well as limited visibility caused by vegetation and the structures. The site was mostly visible from the bridleway through the site, a small section of the cycleway, and high ground at Bury Ring. The effects decrease with distance from Moderate Adverse to Slight Adverse. Further away the effects reduce to Negligible adverse. The assessment was undertaken in winter and views towards the site would be more heavily screened during the summer months.”

- 3.7 With regards to cumulative impacts the LVIA states at paragraph 8.5 that:

“The site has been considered in relation to cumulative effects. However as there are no new developments proposed, the effects are considered as part of the baseline which includes the existing polytunnels, approved by Stafford Borough Council. In the event these tunnels were removed this would result in the polyhouses being isolated within the landscape. This would be similar to the nature of farmsteads, barns and other isolated polytunnels appreciated within the wider landscape, and therefore within character of the wider character area. Mitigation planting could also reduce the visual effect similar to farmsteads appreciated within the landscape.”

- 3.8 In terms of the cumulative impact of the polyhouses with surrounding polyhouses at both Billington and Dearnsdale Farms it first has to be acknowledged that the PfSB does not contain a specific policy in relation to polytunnels or their cumulative impact. As such general design and landscape policies are considered. The submitted LVIA concludes that the development has a very limited effect on the landscape character and visual receptors.
- 3.9 The LPA concur with the findings of the LVIA and in arriving at the overall planning balance at Section 9 of this report the impact on landscape character and the visual amenities of the area will be weighed in conjunction with the affect on surrounding heritage assets.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The Plan for Stafford Borough
Policy E2 - Sustainable Rural Development
Policy N1 - Design
Policy N8 - Landscape Character

Staffordshire County Council 'Planning for Landscape Change' Supplementary Planning Guidance

4. HERITAGE CONSERVATION

- 4.1 Sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard shall be to had the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.
- 4.2 Section 16 of the NPPF and specifically paragraphs 199 to 202 require detailed consideration to be given to the impact of developments on heritage assets and that where harm is necessary these should be outweighed by public benefits. Furthermore, at paragraph 200 substantial harm to assets of highest significance, for instance scheduled monuments, should be wholly exceptional. Paragraph 201 states that where development leads to substantial harm the development should be refused unless the harm can be outweighed by the substantial public benefits of the proposal.
- 4.3 Policy N9 in the PfSB deals with the historic environment and requires that development proposals sustain and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting, and that all potential harm to the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, requires clear justification.

Designated heritage assets

- 4.4 In response to objections from Historic England over the impact of the proposal on the scheduled monuments at Bury Ring and Stafford Castle a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been submitted. The HIA also includes impacts on the setting of the Grade II Listed Stallbrook Hall.
- 4.5 The HIA includes a visual analysis of impacts from a range of viewpoints, including seasonal variations, and these being different to those in the LVIA. Furthermore, it considers mitigation measures in relocating the built part of the proposal to western part of the site where it relates better to existing polytunnels at Dearnsdale Farm, and the planting of a native woodland tree belt in the eastern portion of the site.

- 4.6 The HIA concludes that the proposal would not cause ‘substantial harm’ to any designated heritage assets. In terms of the impact on Stafford Castle, this is considered to be neutral to negligible and would make no material difference to cumulative effects. The impact on Bury Ring is also considered to be limited to one location from the bridleway beyond the monument (viewpoints 2 and 3), although this is considered to have a minor negative effect. In turn, the impact on the setting of Stallbrook Hall is considered to be adequately mitigated by screening from the proposed native woodland planting belt, although the existing leylandii hedge would be removed.
- 4.7 Historic England agrees that the primary impact is within the views away from the Berry Hill hillfort to the north and looking out across from the north of the Castle site. Historic England does however disagree with other conclusions in the HIA in respect of the magnitude of the impact. For instance, the extent to which existing polytunnels would screen the new polyhouses; that the height of the polyhouses makes no material difference to impact; and the level to which the new development would add to cumulative impact and harm. Further key concerns relate to the height and scale of the development, its permanence in the landscape and loss of open space. Historic England also add a further consideration with the change the scheme would have on the surrounding historic landform with additional infrastructure and elements such as the reservoir.
- 4.8 Overall, Historic England considers the scheme to have a permanent negative change to the settings of the two scheduled monuments with a moderate level of harm to the significance of Bury Ring and a lower level of harm to Stafford Castle. On this basis, Historic England withdraws its formal objection and now raises ‘concern’ but advises that the Local Planning Authority weighs up the harm of the proposal against the public benefits of the scheme.
- 4.9 In terms of the setting the Grade II Listed Stallbrook Hall, the Conservation Officer acknowledges that there is a substantial mature hedge between the boundary of the listed building and the application site. Also, that the proposal includes the planting of a vegetation belt to the eastern part of the application site providing screening in views from Stallbrook Hall.
- 4.10 However, in objecting to the scheme the Conservation Officer states:
- “However, the wider historic rural landscape which is read directly in context with the Hall would be infilled by the development; encroaching into the setting of the listed building and resulting in the loss its context in the wider landscape.”*
- 4.11 There is clearly a difference of opinion between the Conservation Officer and the conclusions of the HIA in terms of the impact on the setting of Stallbrook Hall. In particular with the HIA stating that:
- “As part of the assessment of impacts, I clearly identified potential high harm to the setting of Stallbrook Hall. This harm has been removed by relocating the built part of the development, by the polyhouses, to the far west of the site, and by replacing the existing leylandii, which removes the Hall from the Landscape, with a more appropriate planted screen to the west side of the Hall only.”*

- 4.12 The significant screening provided by the existing leylandii hedge therefore needs to be considered when assessing the immediate setting of Stallbrook Hall and how this would be changed with the proposed mitigation planting. Taking the above views into account it is considered that the degree of change by landscape planting on the immediate setting of Stallbrook would not be significant. In turn, the impact on the wider setting of the Stallbrook Hall from infilling development and the loss of its context is not considered to be substantiated and particularly with Historic England raising no formal objection to the change the proposal would have on the wider setting of the two ancient monuments from such infilling.
- 4.13 Additionally, whilst the Conservation Officer raises a strong objection with stating that the proposal is contrary to paragraphs 200 and 201 of the NPPF the degree of harm is not specified. For instance, no reference is given as to whether proposal amounts to 'substantial harm' to the setting of Stallbrook Hall (paragraph 201), or whether any harm would be outweighed by substantial public benefits of the scheme in relation to paragraph 201.
- 4.14 In weighing up the planning balance and particularly whether any harm to the historic assets is outweighed by public benefits the following factors need to be considered:
- The site forms part of an established agricultural operation at Billington Farm for the production of soft fruit and including the utilisation of polytunnels.
 - An Economic Statement supports the application and whilst this is dated 2017 and is the same as that which supports application 17/27543/FUL it provides an overall picture of the Billington Farm operation. Details include staff/labour numbers and the Billington and Stallbrook sites accounting for 98% of the business turnover. The submitted Design Statement also explains that polyhouses would allow the growing period for strawberry production to be lengthened by six weeks.
 - On this basis, it is clear that the proposal would augment the Billington Farm operation making it more competitive by securing the optimum viable use of the land and in turn contributing towards economic inward investment in Stafford Borough from business turnover and employment.
- 4.15 In conclusion, whilst Historic England accepts that the proposal would have a permanent negative change this would not result in substantial harm to the setting of the two Ancient Monuments and only raise concern. Whilst the Conservation Officer raises a strong objection the degree of harm to the setting of the Grade II Stallbrook Hall is not specified. It is considered that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to heritage assets and when factoring in the public benefits of the scheme these are considered to outweigh the harm to the heritage assets.

Archaeology

- 4.16 In response to the original comments of the County Council Archaeological Officer a Geophysical Survey report and Archaeological Assessment has been submitted.
- 4.17 Whilst the County Council's Archaeological Officer agrees with the scope of the reports a further phase of archaeological evaluation is recommended involving a programme of archaeological trial trenching comprising a 2% sample with a 1% contingency to be carried out in the eastern portion of the site in the area covered by the ground source heat recovery array and the proposed attenuation pond.
- 4.18 The County Council's Archaeological Officer therefore recommended a condition to secure the above measures. However, as the development has now been partially completed the further archaeological works can only be secured on part of the site. A suitably worded condition should be attached to secure these works.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraphs 199 - 205 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Part 1:

Policy N9 - Historic Environment

5. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

- 5.1 Access to the site is from the northeast corner and a routing plan accompanies a Transport Statement which shows workers and agricultural machinery travelling north along Derrington Lane, Castle View and Billington Lane before turning east along Crossing Lane before entering the site.
- 5.2 The Transport Statement points out that workers usually commence work at 06:00 and return to their accommodation on site at Billington between 16:00 and 18:00 hours. Caravans at Billington are established where a coach service is provided and workers at Stallbrook will be transported by coach on the public highway. Also, vehicles at Billington Farm include 3 8/10m refrigerated rigid axle lorries, 2 fifty seater coaches and 3 eight seater minibuses.
- 5.3 Whilst the Transport Statement explains that it is not possible to specify the precise number and type of vehicle movements due to a number of factors the Highway Authority raise no objections to the scheme subject to conditions. The conditions cover wheel washing facilities for vehicles and a 5m section of the field track immediately to the road being surfaced with a bound macadam or concrete and should be attached to any grant of permission.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.4 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decision should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Circular 1/09 also advises that conditions should not be used to obtain consent to stop-up or divert a right of way before development commences as these duplicate separate statutory procedures.

- 5.5 PROW Seighford 1 follows the shared driveway to the cluster of residential properties around Stallbrook Hall in a southeast direction before entering the site further to the south and continuing in a southern direction. The layout plan shows that the PROW would extend through the middle and length of the woodland planting buffer.
- 5.6 To safeguard PROW the previous two planning permissions for the retention of polytunnels at the Billington Farm (09/12265/FUL and 12/18118/FUL) are subject to conditions. The conditions require that polytunnels are not located within 2m and 3m of the centre of a public right of way and bridleway respectively.
- 5.7 The PROW Officer noted that the PROW would be impacted by the proposal as it runs over, or very near to the western side of the attenuation basin. However, the scheme has subsequently been amended and the location of the attenuation basin revised. The PROW would now run along the proposed woodland planting buffer, to which the PROW Officer provided no additional comments. The proposed woodland planting buffer would need to accommodate the PROW unless the applicant proposed to divert the PROW, which would be resolved separate to the planning process. An informative should be included to ensure that the applicant is aware of the PROW and the associated responsibilities.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:
Paragraph 100

The Plan for Stafford Borough
T1 - Transport, T2 - Parking and Manoeuvring Facilities

DEFRA Rights of Way Circular 1/09

6. DRAINAGE, WATER QUALITY AND FLOODING

- 6.1 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) notes that the site is within Flood Zone 1 and outside of any surface water flooding areas. Also, a watercourse flows in a northerly direction along the northeast frontage of the site and towards Doxey Brook.
- 6.2 The FRA concludes that there is largely a very low surface water flooding risk across the area designated for the polyhouses. The FRA therefore advocates that sustainable drainage infiltration techniques are adopted where surface water runoff from the roof area is conveyed to an infiltration basis to store and infiltrate the runoff volume. The FRA also states that surface water contained within the basin would be re-used as part of a rainwater harvesting and irrigation system across the site. A system of pumps and pipes would be used to distribute the surface water to the fruit crops.

- 6.3 The submitted FRA is dated April 2020 before the proposal was amended. However, notwithstanding this fact the Environment Agency (EA) raise no objection following the submission of details of a buffer tank. The EA do however provide advice to applicant about potential permits being required from the EA and which can be attached as an informative to any grant of permission.
- 6.4 The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) originally objected the proposal due to insufficient information being submitted in relation to infiltration testing, basin half drain time, a management and maintenance plan and a potential overland flow route. The neighbours' concerns regarding flooding and drainage are noted, however following the submission of amended and additional information the LLFA removed their objection and advised that they are satisfied with the submitted proposals. A condition should be attached to ensure that the drainage is provided in accordance with the submitted details and retained as such. Subject to adhering to such condition the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regards to flooding and drainage.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraphs 159, 160 and 167 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

Policy N2 - Climate Change

7. ECOLOGY

- 7.1 Paragraph 174 in the NPPF advises that planning decisions should, amongst other things, minimise the impacts on and provide net biodiversity gains.
- 7.2 An Ecological Report supports the application dated 31 March 2020 following a walkover survey of the site. The report describes the site as a parcel of bare arable ground which offers little potential for protected species given its management and high level of disturbance.

Protected Species

- 7.3 In terms of protected species, the Ecological Report concludes that due to the lack of linkage and suitable terrestrial habitat it is unlikely that amphibians are present on the site. Also, no potential tree roost sites were located on the site although no trees will be impacted by the proposed works. Additionally, whilst potential bird nesting habitat occurs within hedgerows bounding the site a bird nest check and reasonable avoidance should be employed.
- 7.4 The Biodiversity Officer has advised that they concur with conclusions of the submitted report. A condition should be attached to ensure that all recommendations within the submitted ecology report are adhered to.

Trees and hedgerows

- 7.5 The site is bound by hedges and contains a few trees, none of which are protected. The proposal seeks to retain the majority of the trees within the site and proposes a 60m wide woodland planting buffer. The Tree Officer was consulted however did not provide any comments. A condition should be attached to ensure that sufficient tree and hedge protection measures are provided for those to be retained. A condition should also be attached to secure a detailed landscape and planting plan for the proposed woodland planting buffer. The Tree Officer would be consulted on the subsequent conditions application to ensure that the details are sufficient.

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

- 7.6 Under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Local Planning Authority as the competent authority, must have further consideration to the impact of this development, in this case, due to the relative proximity, on the Cannock Chase SAC. The site is within 15km of the Cannock Chase SAC and as such the LPA have completed a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) which concludes that the development is not considered to have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC. Natural England have advised that they concur with this HRA. On this basis, it is concluded that the LPA have met its requirements as the competent authority, as required by the Regulations and therefore the proposal will comply with the requirements of the Development Plan and the NPPF in this regard.

Policies and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Government Circular 06/05:

Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and their impact within the Planning System

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policy N4 - The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure

N6 - Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

8. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 8.1 Paragraph 185 in the NPPF seeks to ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account, amongst other things, pollution on health and living conditions. Further to this at criterion (a) to mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impact resulting from noise from new development, and at (c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light.
- 8.2 Policy N1 (e) follows on from paragraph 185 in requiring the design and layout of new development to take account of noise and light implication, together with the amenity of adjacent residential areas.

- 8.3 The polyhouse operation has the potential to affect residential properties not only in terms of their visual impact but because of the noise created by vehicular movements to and from the site and pickers working in the early morning / late evening. Together with any additionally artificial lighting. The neighbour's concerns regarding residential amenity are noted.
- 8.4 In the determination of the previous two planning permissions for the retention of polytunnels at the Billington Farm (09/12265/FUL and 12/18118/FUL) the Hertfordshire Supplementary Planning Guidance was considered. The planning permissions therefore contain conditions to retain a 30m separation between the polytunnels from the boundaries of certain residential properties. Furthermore, within these buffer areas that there is no associated storage, vehicle parking or any other activities connected with fruit growing
- 8.5 All neighbouring properties are located in excess of 100m from all of the proposed structures and given the separation distances involved no concerns are raised in respect of surrounding residential properties being unduly affected by restricted outlook.
- 8.6 The original Acoustic Report concluded that measures would be necessary to mitigate the impact of the heat pumps and boiler plant in the operations building. The building would therefore need to be insulated to reduce emitted noise. However, since the proposal has been revised an updated noise report has been submitted which takes account of the revised location of the operations building. The nearest residential property is identified as being The Bungalow located 273m to the northwest beyond the Millennium Way. The updated report concludes that a worst case noise calculation results in 25 dB(A) which is 11 dB(A) below the guideline noise level of 36 dB(A).
- 8.7 It is assumed that the revised calculations are still based on the noise mitigation measures being incorporated into the design of the operations building. The Environmental Health Officer accepts the conclusions on the Acoustic Report and updated noise report and has raised no objections with regards to noise. A suitably worded condition should be attached to any grant of permission to ensure that appropriate noise mitigation measures are incorporated into the design of the operations building.
- 8.8 With regards to lighting, a condition should be added to any permission to clarify that any artificial lighting would require planning permission. The provision of workers facilities are suitably covered by other legislation.
- 8.9 It should be borne in mind that the countryside is a working environment as well as a living environment. There is therefore no objection in terms of residential amenity.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraph 185

The Plan for Stafford Borough
Policy N1 - Design

9. CONCLUSION AND PLANNING BALANCE

9.1 In conclusion, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle and would provide additional facilities to this established farm and subsequently contribute to the local economy. The development, subject to conditions, is not considered to impact upon highway safety, residential amenity nor biodiversity. The scheme would provide additional planting which would create additional onsite habitat. The proposal is also considered to be acceptable with regards to drainage and flooding. The scheme would have limited visual impacts upon this historic landscape and would cause less than substantial harm impact the setting of nearby heritage assets. It is considered that the public benefits afforded by the proposal would substantially outweigh the harm caused to the heritage assets. Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with the Development Plan and NPPF and is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

CONSULTATIONS

Summaries of the comments made by technical consultees are listed below. All consultee comments submitted on this application are available to be viewed in full on the Council's Public Access website.

SCC Highway Authority:

Response dated 21.4.2020

No objection.

Conditions recommended to secure wheel cleaning facilities to all vehicular accesses from the fields to the highway, and 5m sections of the access track to the immediate road being surface in bound macadam or concrete.

Environment Agency:

Response dated 11.3.2021

No further comments.

Response dated 11.2.2021

No objection.

Advice to applicant about potential permits being required from the Environment Agency.

Response dated 21.1.21

Object.

The information submitted does not relate to the concerns previously raised.

Response dated 9.6.2020

Object.

Still outstanding matters in relation to how additional storage tanks will be filled, details of the surface water drainage strategy / infiltration basin, and the maintenance regime programme for the infiltration basin

Response dated 12.5.2020

Object.

Further information required in relation to proposed ground source heat recovery system, additional water storage tanks and surface water drainage strategy and the maintenance regime programme for the infiltration basin.

SCC Lead Local Flood Authority:

Response dated 10.2.22

No objection

Now satisfied with the submitted proposals.

Response dated 20.12.2021

Object

Further information required regarding discharge method and management and maintenance.

Response dated 28.7.2021

Object

Further information required regarding final detailed drainage design, clarification of the positioning of the basin, proposed discharge point, modelling, impermeable plan area, management and maintenance plan and exceedance plan.

Response dated 8.4.2021

Object

Further information required regarding final detailed drainage design.

Response dated 11.2.2021

Object

No new information has been provided that relates to initial objections.

Response dated 26.1.2021

Object

No new information has been provided that relates to initial objections.

Response dated 26.5.2020

Object

Having reviewed the additional information very little if anything has changed to address the issues previously raised.

Response dated 1.5.2020

Planning permission should not be granted until the following issues have been adequately addressed - Infiltration testing; basin half drain time; management and maintenance plan; and potential overland flow route.

Historic England:

Response dated 26.1.2021

Agree that the primary impact is within the views away from the Berry Hill hillfort to the north and looking out across from the north of the Castle site.

However, disagree with other conclusions in the HIA in respect of the magnitude of the impact. For instance, the extent to which existing polytunnels would screen the new polyhouses; that the height of the polyhouses makes no material difference to impact; and the level to which the new development would add to cumulative impact and harm.

Overall level of harm to Berry Ring is suggested to be minor. However, height and scale of the polyhouses, the detracting element and loss of landscape would have a greater impact and more moderate level of harm

Key concern is the relative height and scale of the development, its permanence in the landscape and loss of open space. This would exacerbate the extent to which polyhouses would intrude or distract in those important views away from Berry Ring, and how noticeable they would be in views from the north of Stafford Castle.

A further consideration is that contribution to cumulative impact would be higher, and the change the scheme would have on the surrounding historic landform with additional infrastructure and elements such as the reservoir.

Overall, consider the scheme to have a permanent negative change to the settings of the two scheduled monuments with a moderate level of harm to the significance of Bury Ring and a lower level of harm to Stafford Castle. On this basis, Historic England withdraws its formal objection and now raises concern but advises that the Local Planning Authority weighs up the harm of the proposal against the public benefits of the scheme.

Response dated 27.7.2020

Object

Additional details and justification have been provided, however, these have not materially changed our advice and we maintain our objection.

The additional information provided relates to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and the relationship of the current application site to previous proposals and approvals.

With regards to the first point, we would maintain our position that the application contains insufficient information to fully assess the level of impact to the setting of the designated heritage assets or understand the resulting benefit, loss of or harm to their significance.

Our previous advice has highlighted the likely permanent negative change to the landscape character from the proposed polyhouse and associated infrastructure. We have made clear that there is a difference in impact between a permanent static polyhouse building versus seasonal polytunnels; which are smaller, moveable and impermanent, normally rotated between fields, and granted as temporary permissions. The previous applications we have been consulted on in this area, including on the application site, have been for the latter.

Where we have been consulted on more substantial proposals - such as the application for long increases to covered seasons and permanent permissions (see Application No. 17/27543/FUL - Our Ref: P00728050) - we have expressed serious concerns, in particular with permanent polytunnels and the associated permanent infrastructure and changes in landform. The impact and harm from these developments would not be intermittent, nor constrained by seasonal length or field rotations. These impacts would not be controlled by temporary permissions and there would be no opportunity for impact and harm to be regularly reassessed as permissions expire, or for it to be removed and positive elements of the landscape character restored.

In terms of exclusion zones around the hillfort, Historic England have not formally agreed to the circular exclusion zone as depicted on the submitted drawing (dated 01/07/2020). The only notes we have on agreeing an area of exclusion in this zone are in response to application 09/12265/FUL (Our letter dated 27 August 2009). This relates to the withdrawal of 'Field 10' on the southeast side of the hillfort from those polytunnel proposals due to impacts on Stafford Castle and the hillfort. This area has also been excluded in subsequent applications. We would still fully endorse this field, and other 'buffer fields' ringing the hillfort, being excluded from any development.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the information submitted, we would also reiterate our previous advice that we would have serious concerns over the introduction of permanent polyhouse developments into the landscape setting of the scheduled monuments. There would be negative impacts upon setting, exacerbating the impact from the existing polytunnel uses, and the resulting potential harm to significance could be high. The spread of these types of permanent installations and infrastructure within these surroundings could radically change the important character of this historic landscape.

Response dated 22.5.2020

Object

The application site lies 900m to the north of the Berry Ring Iron Age hillfort and 1.4km to the west of Stafford Castle and associated medieval settlement, which are scheduled monuments.

A key component of significance is the settings of these sites. Both the hillfort and the Castle were designed to be dominant elements within the landscape, exerting influence over their surroundings and taking advantage of wide commanding views for control and defence. There is also an intervisibility between the two sites and other nearby scheduled monuments.

The character of the landscape around the monuments is an important aspect of their setting. Changes in land-use and landforms, introductions of modern structures and features, and changes in the environment can negatively impact these positive aspects.

The landscape around the hillfort and the application site is populated by a number of existing polytunnel sites. These polytunnels are non-permanent structures and originally permissions have been for temporary use. Variations and new permissions over the past 10 years have notably increased tunnel coverage and the length of the covered seasons and reduced the rotation between fields. A significant portion of this landscape is now covered, at the same time, for large parts of the year. In addition, the proposals have resulted in changes to the landform from features such as reservoirs, infrastructure and temporary accommodation, as well as the ground beneath the tunnels.

The proposed polyhouse would be a permanent static structure and for year round production. The proposals would introduce a new large and notably modern built feature into the landscape setting of the scheduled monuments. The blank stretch of polythene covers would highlight the building and create visual impacts which could draw the eye, and the proposals would add to and exacerbate the current negative impact from the existing polytunnels sites within these settings. In addition, although adjacent to other poly tunnelled fields, the proposal at Stallbrook Hall would result in the loss of one of the few remaining 'un-tunnelled' parcels of land in this area north of the hillfort. Together with ancillary structures and changes to landform and infrastructure, the current proposals would constitute a permanent negative change to the landscape character of this part of the monuments' setting. This could result in harm to the significance of the scheduled monument.

The current application site was included in a previous application for polytunnels (Application No. 17/27543/FUL) which Historic England commented on in letters dated 15 December 2017, 20 February 2018, 16 May 2018, and 7 May 2019 (Our Ref: P00728050). As per that previous advice, we have serious concerns with the introduction of permanent polytunnel / polyhouse developments and the associated permanent infrastructure and changes in landform within the landscape setting of Stafford Castle and Berry Ring hillfort. Unlike the existing temporary polytunnel sites, the impact and harm from the permanent developments would not be intermittent, nor constrained by seasonal length or field rotations. These impacts could not be effectively controlled by temporary permissions and there would be no opportunity for impact and harm to be regularly reassessed as permissions expire, or for it to be removed and positive elements of the landscape character restored.

The current scheme is not supported by a heritage statement or other appropriate assessment of impact upon the historic environment. Although the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment includes some limited views looking out from Stafford Castle and beside the hillfort, this does not display sufficient detail or expert understanding to adequately assess the setting impact of this scheme upon the significance of these designated heritage assets. It does not identify the significance of the scheduled monuments, assess their settings beyond the visual considerations, or look at the contribution the application site might make that setting or significance. It has not been undertaken in line with the appropriate standards and guidance, such as *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)*. A key area not considered in the application at all is the cumulative impact of this development alongside the existing polytunnel sites (and associated infrastructure) and the wider impact and erosion of the landscape character around these monuments.

There is also no detailed assessment of the impact on the setting other heritage assets - such as the Grade II Listed Stallbrook Hall - or assessment of the potential archaeological impact within the site itself.

The application does not meet the requirements of NPPF 189 - 190 or Policy N9 (Historic Environment) of the Stafford Borough Local Plan. It is not possible from the information provided for the Council to fully assess the level of impact, visual or otherwise, to the setting of the designated heritage assets or understand the resulting benefit, loss of or harm to their significance.

Historic England therefore objects to this application on heritage grounds. Insufficient information has been provided. Any application for development within this sensitive landscape must be accompanied by a heritage impact assessment which looks in detail at the setting and significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets and includes an assessment of cumulative impact.

Notwithstanding this, we would still have very serious concerns over the introduction of permanent polyhouse developments into the landscape setting of the scheduled monuments. There would be negative impacts upon setting, exacerbating the impact from the existing polytunnel uses, and the resulting potential harm to significance could be high. The spread of these types of permanent installations and infrastructure within these surroundings could radically change the important character of this historic landscape.

SBC Conservation Officer:

Response dated 28.1.2021

Objection

The application relates to a field approximately 90m west of Stallbrook Hall. The site appears to extend an existing swathe of 'temporary' polytunnels located at Billington Farm to the south.

The settings of the scheduled monuments have already been impacted by the existing polytunnels. When erected, the polythene sheeting of the tunnels is visually intrusive and the wide coverage erodes the open and undeveloped character of the rural landscape surrounding Stallbrook Hall and the historic farmstead, subsequently causing harm to its setting and significance.

Over the past decade Billington Farm and the adjacent Dearnside Farm have notably increased the number of polytunnels and length of the covered seasons and reduced the rotation between fields. Taken together, the polytunnels for these two farms extend over a significant portion of the landscape and are covered, at the same time, for large parts of the year. The impact of any new polytunnels must be considered cumulatively with those already existing and proposed. The new polytunnel site within this historic landscape would result in the loss of one of the few remaining 'un-tunnelled' areas of land in this northern area, thus eroding the unoccupied and open spaces within the setting of the scheduled monuments and Stallbrook Hall.

With regard to Stallbrook Hall, it is acknowledged that there is a substantial mature hedge between the boundary of the listed building and the application site in addition to the proposed planting of a vegetation belt to the eastern part of the application site providing screening in views from the Hall. However, the wider historic rural landscape which is read directly in context with the Hall would be infilled by the development; encroaching in to the setting of the listed building and resulting in the loss of its context in the wider landscape.

Disagree with some of conclusions of the Heritage Impact Assessment and consider that the visual impacts of the development are more significant than the report concludes.

The proposed development by way of infilling existing 'un-tunnelled' open spaces in the historic rural landscape, increased season length and the permanent infrastructure of the polytunnels and the ground source heat pump is harmful to the setting of the three designated heritage assets identified. I mirror Historic England's concerns that the

introduction of the permanent polyhouse developments into this landscape would have a negative impact upon settings, resulting in harm to the significance of designated heritage assets.

The proposed development is contrary to Policy N1, N8 and N9 of the Plan for Stafford Borough and paragraphs 194 and 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF). On this basis there is a strong conservation objection to the proposed development and the application should be refused.

SCC Archaeologist:

Response dated 17.3.2021

Previous comments remain valid. However due to amendments the trial trenching would only be required within the footprint of the ground source heat recovery array and the associated tree planting.

Response dated 26.1.2021

Further phase of archaeological evaluation is required to better understand the archaeological significance of the site. Therefore, recommends a programme of archaeological trial trenching comprising a 2% sample with a 1% contingency to be carried within the area of the site where there will be physical impact on the ground i.e., the eastern portion of the site to include the area covered by the ground source heat recovery array and the proposed attenuation pond. A condition is recommended to secure the above measures

Response dated 17.6.2020

Considering the nature and scale of the proposals it is recommended that the Heritage Statement requested by Historic England should also include an assessment of the potential archaeological impact of the proposals. This should be underpinned by an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (ADBA) which would consider the archaeological potential of the application site, the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource and make suggestions for appropriate mitigation.

The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

Conditions recommended to secure a written scheme of investigation and for archaeological works to be implemented in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation. Furthermore, that the development is not brought into use until the scheme has been published and archived.

SCC Rights of Way Officer:

Response dated 11.3.2021

The applicant has received advice from the Rights of Way Officer in managing the intersection where vehicles are to pass over the bridleway. No further comments.

Response dated 26.1.2021

Appears from the amended plan that Bridleway 1 Seighford Parish will be impacted by the proposal as it runs slightly over or at best in a very near proximity to the western side of the proposed run off irrigation/water storm collection pool. The applicant should be reminded that the granting of planning permission does not constitute authority for any interference with the right of way or its closure or diversion.

Response dated 1.5.2020

Public bridleway 1 Seighford Parish generally runs in a south-north westerly direction skirting the western side of the application site. It does not appear from the application documents that this right of way will be affected by the proposals. It is important that users of the footpath are still able to exercise public rights safely. The applicant should be reminded that the granting of planning permission does not constitute authority for any interference with the right of way or its closure or diversion.

Ramblers Association:

Response dated 16.3.2021

The amendments have addressed the previous concerns and with these additional actions the ROW Seighford 1 should be protected.

Response dated 10.2.2021

Concerned that Seighford 1 is not shown on the plans and that the potential for obstruction and destruction of the surface for riders and walkers remain high.

Response dated 12.5.2020

Object.

The water collection point for run off from the proposed polytunnels appears to run either over or along the boundary with Seighford 1. This land is extremely soft at the best of times and excess water gathering in this area is likely to render the bridleway impassable to pedestrians and horse riders

Probability that heavy machinery would need to be deployed to construct the run off and this will obstruct the path for some time. Path may not be repaired to a satisfactory standard.

SBC Environmental Health Officer:

Response dated 17 February 2021

The amended noise report to reflect the new proposed siting is satisfactory for our purposes, no further actions are recommended.

Response dated 18.1.2021

Note that the layout of the proposed has altered, I recommend a refreshed acoustic opinion report to accompany the altered application as the original acoustic report and mitigations may not reflect the impact of the newly proposed.

Response dated 23.4.2020.

The acoustic report is satisfactory for our purpose. The recommendations of the report should be adhered to and verified upon completion.

Natural England:

Response dated 5.2.2021

Agree with the screening assessment in relation to the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation.

Biodiversity Officer:

Response dated 13.5.2020

Submitted Ecological Appraisal did not find evidence of protected species. Protection for nesting birds advised.

Tree Officer:

Consultation dated 21.4.2020

No response received

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England:

Response dated 11.2.2021

CPRE is not calling for a ban on British farmers producing horticultural crops using polytunnels (or polyhouses) and it believes polytunnels have a place in the diverse English farmed landscape. However, their location, scale, design and management are of great importance as polytunnels can have significant effects on landscape, soil and amenity.

The greater permanence and scale of the polyhouses is of particular concern considering the proximity of the development to three important sites of historic interest, being Stallbrook Hall, Stafford Castle and Bury Ring Iron Age Fort.

Polytunnels should not be allowed to cause significant damage to the environment. The interests and amenity of local residents should be taken into account and protected. The aim should be to prevent other local businesses (such as those dependent on tourism) being damaged by a proliferation of polythene.

CPRE Staffordshire agrees with the more detailed Conservation Officer Response (28-1-21) and Historic England response (27-1-21) regarding the effects on landscape, amenity and environment of the current proposal.

Seighford Parish Council:

Response dated 20.7.21

No comments.

Response dated 17.3.21

No objection.

Response dated 26.1.21

No objection subject to residents at Stallbrook properties being consulted prior to the removal of the leylandii hedge to ensure that the replacement tree belt will have sufficiently matured to provide an adequate screen along that side of the property.

Response dated 6.5.2020

No objection.

Adjacent Parish Council - Hyde Lea Parish Council:

Response dated 28.4.2020

Impact of the development is on Crossing Lane which is within Seighford Parish. Therefore, suggest that Seighford Parish are invited to comment as the development affects their residents.

Adjacent Parish Council - Haughton Parish Council:

Responses dated 20.7.2021 and 23.3.2021

No comments.

Response dated 26.1.2021

Raise concern regarding vehicle and traffic access to the site but it will be looked by the Highway Authority.

Response dated 4.5.2020

No objection but was considerable concern that the polyhouses are on a permanent basis so there may be some environmental concerns.

Adjacent Parish Council - Bradley Parish Council:

Consultations dated 21.04.2020, 13.7.2020, 12.1.2021, 10.3.2021, 23.07.2021

No response received

Neighbours:

Third consultation 12.3.2021

147 neighbour letters sent out and 26 representations received from 20 properties

Objections / concerns raised:-

Highway safety

- Unsuitable vehicle access for construction vehicles
- Unsuitable vehicle access for farm vehicles/HGVs
- Highway safety concerns for all highway users
- Increased traffic

Flooding/drainage

- Existing flooding issues will be exacerbated
- Impact upon existing drainage systems
- Question drainage proposals

Residential amenity

- Loss of light
- Increased noise
- Residential amenity

Ecology/environment

- Detrimental environmental impact
- Impact upon wildlife and biodiversity
- Increased pollution: water, soil, air pollution, plastic pollution, litter
- Increased water extraction
- Not a sustainable, eco-friendly farming method

Visual impact

- Design in rural area
- Detrimental visual impact - eyesore
- Detrimental impact upon the Millennium Way/Greenway environment
- Already too many poly tunnels in this area
- Impact upon heritage assets

Principle of development

- Inappropriate development
- Alternate sites should be considered

Other

- Implications of infill development
- Development has commenced
- Large amount of local/public opposition to proposal
- Contrary to local and national policy
- Issues with existing polytunnels in the area

4 support, material considerations summarised as follows:

- Proposal is a more sustainable environmentally friendly methods of soft fruit farming
- Support local farmers
- Support the production of British food
- The applicant has provided the required drainage to prevent flooding
- Wastewater and chemicals will be appropriately managed
- More sustainable than importing soft fruits
- Modern farming methods should be embraced

Second consultation 13.7.2020

115 neighbour letters sent out and 44 representations received from 34 properties

41 Objections, material considerations summarised as follows:

Highway safety

- Highway safety concerns for all highway users
- Inappropriate roads/access for HGVs and large farm vehicles
- Increased traffic
- Increased traffic will further damage Crossing Lane and other access lanes

Flooding/drainage

- Existing flooding issues will be exacerbated
- Question drainage proposals

Residential amenity

- Residential amenity
- Loss of privacy
- Increased noise
- Loss of light

Ecology/environment

- Impact upon wildlife and biodiversity
- Removal of trees, hedgerows
- Inappropriate disposal of materials (plastic sheeting)
- Increased pollution: water, air, soil, microplastics
- Not environmentally friendly farming practise

Visual impact

- Design in rural area
- Detrimental visual impact - eyesore
- Polyhouse is too big (height and footprint)
- Scale of development too large
- Site area is larger than Derrington village
- Detrimental impact upon the Millennium Way/Greenway environment
- Impact upon heritage assets
- Amendment has increased the size of the polyhouses

Principle of development

- Unnecessary development of the green belt
- Inappropriate location
- Organic and sustainable farming methods should be pursued
- Already too many poly tunnels in this area
- Applicant owns land which is in a more suitable location than this site

Other

- Large amount of local/public opposition to proposal
- Implications of infill development
- Unsustainable development
- Limited impact upon local economy
- Contrary to local and national policy
- Incorrect/inaccurate submission
- Would have a minimal impact upon local economy

3 support, material considerations summarised as follows:

- This area flooded before the polytunnels were erected
- The culvert under the old railway track needs reopening to its full capacity
- There will be no traffic increase as the site is already used for soft fruit farming
- The farm traffic slows down speeds on the local roads
- The proposal would reduce food air miles as local produce would be available for longer
- Increase job opportunities
- Sustainable farming methods (inc heat pump)
- Poly tunnels aren't attractive but are necessary
- Increased production of local food

First consultation 21.4.2020

43 neighbour letters sent out and 82 representations received from 66 properties

81 objections, material considerations summarised as follows:

Highway safety

- Access roads are poor quality single track with no street lighting and can't accommodate the proposed level of traffic and size of vehicle
- Increased traffic
- Increased use of private road
- Existing traffic speeding issues will be worsened
- Highway safety concerns for all highway users
- Applicant should pay for and maintain access road improvements
- Vehicles leave debris/mud on roads
- Submitted transport assessment is inadequate

Flooding/drainage

- Existing flooding issues will be exacerbated
- Neighbouring properties will be at increased risk of being flooded as they are downstream from the development and attenuation pool
- Flooding affects existing foul drainage systems
- Submitted FRA is inaccurate
- Applicant should upgrade and maintain Presford Brook
- Increased abstraction of water

Residential amenity

- Impact upon residential amenity
- Noise from traffic, machinery, workers
- Noise and vibration from heat pumps
- Impact upon outlook

Ecology/environment

- Impact upon wildlife and biodiversity
- Increased chemical run off
- Environmental impact
- Loss of habitat
- Decrease in soil quality
- Insufficient ecology report
- Increased pollution: air, water, litter
- Unsustainable use and disposal of materials (plastic sheeting, metal hoops etc)
- Not sustainable farming

Visual impact

- Design in rural area
- Eyesore in rural area
- Unacceptable height
- Permanent structures
- Negative impact upon The Greenway/Millennium Way foot/cycle path
- Impact upon landscape and landscape character
- Impact upon nearby heritage assets
- Historic views impacted
- Impact upon historic landscape
- Proposal is out of scale compared to neighbouring dwellings and the village of Derrington

Principle of development

- Will site be cleared if no longer required
- Proposal has limited positive impact upon the local economy
- Already lots of polytunnels in this area, no need for further development on this type
- Set a precedent
- Applicant owns land which is in a more suitable location than this site

Other

- Contrary to local and national policy
- Poor quality submission
- Application form incorrect
- Cumulative impact of other existing polytunnels
- Statutory consultees have objected
- Increased temporary accommodation would be required for workers
- Need for appropriate facilities for workers (toilets etc)
- Potential for crime/theft of produce
- Local workers should be employed
- Applicant is a member of the Parish Council
- Seeks clarification of sites location

1 support, material considerations summarised as follows:

- Support growth of farming business
- Suitable use in rural farming land

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORYBillington Farm

09/11583/COU - Change of use from agricultural land to agricultural land used for the siting of seasonal agricultural worker's caravans, not removed at the end of the agricultural season, required in connection with the farming operations on the holding – Approved 02.04.2009

09/12265/FUL - Retention of polytunnels - Approved 28.04.2011

12/16870/COU - Change of use from agricultural land to agricultural land for the siting of seasonal agricultural workers caravans on wheels - Approved 23.05.2012

12/18118/FUL - Variation of conditions 1, 2 and 3 of permission 09/12265/FUL to allow for the erection of an additional 4 hectares of polytunnels - Approved 22.02.2013

12/17255/FUL - Variation or deletion of Condition 3 of permission 12/16870/COU to remove the requirement to paint or clad the roofs of the caravans - Approved 28.03.2013

12/17219/DCON - Discharge of Condition 4 (landscaping) and 5 (lighting) for permission 12/16870/COU - Approved 20.07.2012

12/17772/DCON - Discharge of conditions 7 and 10 on permission 09/12265/FUL for retention of polytunnels - Condition 7 approved, Condition 5 refused 24.11.2014

16/24163/FUL - Erection of ground mounted solar PV array - Approved 14.07.2016

17/25988/DCON - To discharge condition 11 on planning permission 09/12265/FUL - Approved 25.04.2017

17/27543/FUL - Soft fruit production under polytunnels - Pending consideration

Adjacent site - Dearnsdale Farm

10/14768/FUL - The retention of polytunnels at Dearnsdale Farm for the continued production of soft fruit - Approved 29.06.2012

13/19545/FUL - Variation of condition 6 on application 10/14768/FUL - Refused 03.02.2014

16/25175/FUL - To vary condition 2 and 6 of 10/14768/FUL - Approved 27.11.2017

15/23026/NAGR - An irrigation reservoir. The reservoir will be filled with catchment run-off from the irrigation currently used on the soft fruit - Prior approval required 30.10.2015

15/23321/PAGR - An irrigation reservoir. The reservoir will be filled with catchment run-off from the irrigation currently used on the soft fruit - Prior approval granted 23.03.2016

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The development authorised by this permission shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved plans and specification, as listed below, except insofar as may be otherwise required by other conditions to which this permission is subject;
 - 19S67P01 A 06/07/2021 (Planning proposals Site and location plan),
 - 19S67P02 (Planning proposals).
2. A) Prior to the commencement of any further development hereby approved, a written scheme of archaeological investigation ('the Scheme') shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The Scheme shall provide details of the programme of archaeological works to be carried out within the site, including post-excavation reporting and appropriate publication.

B) The archaeological site work shall thereafter be implemented in full in accordance with the written scheme of archaeological investigation approved under condition (2A).

C) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post-excavation assessment has been completed in accordance with the written scheme of archaeological investigation approved under condition (2A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.
3. Within three months of the date of this permission, a detailed landscape and planting scheme (incorporating the retention of existing trees if required) shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The subsequently approved landscape and planting scheme shall thereafter be implemented within eight months of the approval of the landscape and planting scheme.

4. Within three months of the date of this permission, vehicle wheel wash facilities shall be provided at the field track rear of the shared drive. The wheel wash facilities shall be retained and all vehicles exiting the site shall utilise the facilities for the life of the development.
5. Within three months of the date of this permission, the first 5m of the field track rear of the shared drive shall be surfaced in a bound macadam or concrete and shall thereafter be retained as such for the life of the development.
6. Within three months of the date of this permission, the drainage scheme shall be provided in accordance with the details within the Flood Risk Assessment, revision B, dated March 2021, produced by Evans Rivers and Coastal Ltd; and the Supplementary SuDS Information, revision A, dated November 2021, produced by JMS Consulting Engineers Ltd. The drainage scheme shall thereafter be retained as such for the life of the development.
7. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the recommendations of the submitted Acoustic Impact Assessment, dated 25 March 2020, produced by Crestwood Environmental.
8. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the recommendations and methods of working within the submitted Ecological Assessment, dated 31st March 2020, produced by Leigh Ecology Ltd.
9. Any tree, hedge or shrub planted as part of the approved landscape and planting scheme (or replacement tree/hedge) on the site and which dies or is lost through any cause during a period of 5 years from the date of first planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.
10. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, no external lighting shall be provided within the application site, without the prior written permission on application, of the Local Planning Authority.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

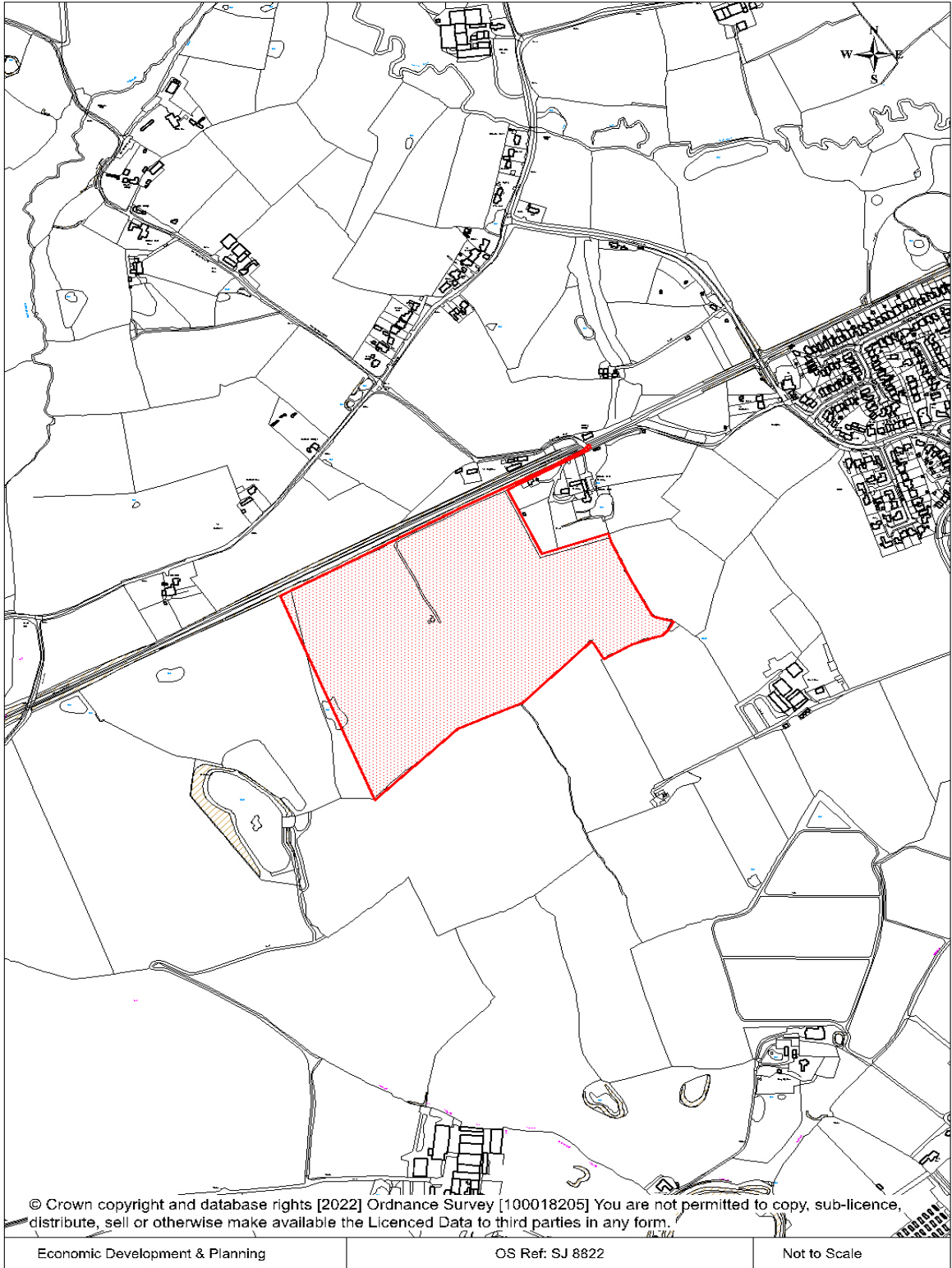
1. To define the permission.
2. In order to afford proper archaeological investigation recording and protection. (Policy N9 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
3. To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development, to safeguard the setting of the nearby heritage assets and to encourage enhancements in biodiversity and habitat. (Policies N1 f, g and h, N4 and N9 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
4. In the interests of the safety and convenience of users of the highway. (Policy T1c of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
5. In the interests of the safety and convenience of users of the highway. (Policy T1c of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

6. To ensure the provision of adequate drainage facilities and to prevent the pollution of any adjacent watercourses, wells and aquifers. (Policy N2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
7. To safeguard the area from undue noise. (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
8. In the interests of ecology and biodiversity. (Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough).
9. To ensure that any initial plant losses are overcome in order to secure enhancements in biodiversity and habitat. (Policies N1 f, g and N4 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
10. To safeguard the amenities of the area (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

Informative

1. In accordance with the requirements of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2010, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.
2. A developer should be aware that even if the approved development's impact upon protected species was not raised as an issue by the Council when determining the application, there remains the possibility that those species may be encountered once work has commenced. The gaining of planning approval does not permit a developer to act in a manner which would otherwise result in a criminal offence to be caused. Where such species are encountered it is recommended the developer cease work and seek further advice (either from Natural England or the Stafford Borough Council Biodiversity Officer) as to how to proceed.
3. The applicant is advised to note and act upon as necessary the comments of the Environment Agency dated 11/02/2021. Where there is any conflict between these comments and the terms of the planning permission, the latter takes precedence.
4. Public Right of Way (PROW) bridleway Seighford 1 runs in a south-north westerly direction across the site. The attention of the applicant shall be drawn to the existence of this route and to the requirement that any planning permission given does not construe the right to divert, extinguish or obstruct any part of the public path.

20/32222/FUL
Land West Of Stallbrook Hall
Crossing Lane
Derrington



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Economic Development & Planning

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Not to Scale