
From: Steve Massey
Sent: 05 September 2023 18:59
To: Johnston, Christopher
Cc: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: SMD/2023/0117 - Rakeway Farm, Rakeway Road, Cheadle

Categories:

Chris

I have the following comments on this application seeking full planning permission for alterations/extension to the existing farmhouse and alterations/extension/conversion of barns to form a dwelling together with formation of new access, as now set out on amended site plan Drg. No. 01248/PL(0)05 Rev E.

Summary: no objection – including to anticipated likely tree removal – subject to conditions including for a landscaping scheme to provide significant landscape and biodiversity enhancements beyond one for one replacement.

The application does not appear to include a tree survey/arboricultural impact assessment report, although there is a significant group of trees at the site frontage to the south-west of the existing farmhouse; however, I appreciate that as submitted the application originally proposed a new access off Rakeway Road c.55m north-west of the existing farm gateway with a new drive looping around to the rear of the site and these trees would not have been affected at all by such arrangements and hence at that stage a tree report would arguably have been unnecessary.

The proposed alterations and extension to the existing farmhouse would not themselves directly affect existing trees/hedges. There is a reasonable need anyway to consider some pruning work to a mature Walnut tree in the garden, situated approx. 5m from the south-west corner of the dwelling due to direct encroachment/contact with the roof, but this applies irrespective of any development proposals. In addition, the Walnut is not presently in good condition, showing extensive foliage browning/shrivelling/dieback apparently due to Leaf Blotch. To a certain extent this may be only an aesthetic problem, and may be notably bad this year due to the wet summer providing optimal climatic conditions for the fungal disease to prosper, but repeated and/or heavy infection may also cause shoot death in addition to partial defoliation and lead to more significant effect on tree health and longer term decline in overall condition.

The proposed alterations/extension/conversion of the existing barns would not themselves directly affect existing trees/hedges.

The amended access arrangements as now set out on Drg. No. 01248/PL(0)05 Rev E would take a new drive off the existing farmyard access to serve the existing farmhouse, routed across the front of the dwelling and through the group of trees to the parking/turning area. Whilst in theory a new drive to a single dwelling could be constructed over tree root systems using no-dig cellular confinement system specification, in this instance given extremely close proximity of the new drive to tree stem positions and existing localised small-scale changes in ground levels in the current overgrown garden where the trees are situated, such special measures drive construction specification would be impractical, ultimately ineffective and therefore inappropriate (notwithstanding the “existing trees retained” annotation on the site plan). Realistically the proposed access arrangements would be anticipated to require the loss of the group of trees (including the Walnut), or have significant adverse impact on their condition such that their removal became inevitable anyway within a short period of time. That said, although the group forms a significant combined feature on the site frontage, in detail it comprises: the Walnut in poor condition (this year at least); a mature Lawson Cypress substantially topped beneath the overhead wires and consequently of little/no amenity value; 2 further mature Lawson Cypress both appearing somewhat moribund with sparse straggly foliage

and anyway somewhat out of keeping in the rural area; and an early-mature Manchurian Cherry which would be of no great significance if retained on its own.

It is therefore considered that it would not be appropriate to raise objection to the application on the grounds of the in practice likely loss of this group of trees, and in the event that the application is approved it would be better in the longer term, and important, to secure by condition a suitable mitigatory planting scheme.

It is noted that the access improvement would require the removal of a short (c.8m) stretch of existing frontage hedgerow immediately to the south-east of the existing farmyard gateway off Rakeway Road, which given its limited extent, and its relationship with the farm access/buildings would be of relatively little wider adverse impact and readily replaced behind the visibility splay as indicated on the plan.

It is also noted that to achieve the required highway visibility to the north-west of the access position would necessitate complete removal of the existing roadside hedge to the front garden of the farmhouse (c.30m of principally non-native hedge – Snowberry), together with complete removal of the existing roadside field hedgerow between Rakeway Farm and Windy End (c.63m of mixed native species hedgerow). Such an extent of hedgerow being removed could have quite a marked immediate impact on local landscape character especially in this rural area outside the Cheadle town development boundary and just beyond the last straggle of semi-rural ribbon development, although it is noted that the site plan again indicates planting a replacement hedge behind the required visibility splay. The existing field hedge has evidently been kept close trimmed at c.1.5m above road level (although seemingly not for the last year or two – no doubt related to the cessation of occupation of Rakeway Farm) and contains no hedgerow trees, so on that basis a newly planted hedge might be expected to achieve a similar amount of structural visual presence after around 5 – 10 years. However, the existing hedgerow is long-established and relatively species-rich; for comparison I have given it an initial cursory (not fully detailed) inspection against only the landscape-related assessment criteria of the Hedgerows Regulations (not a requirement in the context of development proposals, and removal would anyway be authorised in the event that full planning permission is granted, but nonetheless informative) and in this context it is likely that the hedgerow would not, quite, qualify as “Important” under the landscape criteria – although potentially still could do under other Hedgerow Regs criteria such as historical/archaeological/ecological. Whilst a replacement hedgerow set back behind a wide new grass verge to the highway would produce a different, more open character to this stretch of Rakeway Road, it would be difficult to argue this in itself would be significantly out of keeping given the similar existing situation along the south side of the road directly opposite the application site.

Overall it may be difficult to sustain objection and refusal of this application solely on the grounds of the initial loss (with subsequent full replacement) of the existing highway frontage hedgerow to the site including visibility splay hedgerow removal. However, in the short to medium term there would be some notable visual impact arising from such removal, and in addition to actual replacement the development, if approved, should make provision for significant landscape and biodiversity enhancement rather than simply replacement/mitigation, so opportunities to provide more than would be removed should be taken. An obvious first suggestion would be to also provide new mixed native species hedgerow to the boundaries of the rear gardens to the existing dwelling and barn conversion where they would abut open field landscape.

Therefore in the event that planning permission is granted I would request that the following conditions be imposed:

1. No trees, shrubs or hedgerows shall be removed other than those whose removal is directly required to accommodate the approved development, unless otherwise approved by the LPA. There shall be no removal of any trees, shrubs or hedgerows during the bird nesting season (nominally March to August inclusive), unless otherwise agreed by the LPA and in this case only following careful inspection by a competent person immediately prior to removal in order to establish that such trees, shrubs or hedgerow are not in active use by nesting wild birds.
2. Within 2 months of the date of this permission a comprehensive landscaping scheme shall be submitted to the LPA for approval. Such a scheme shall in particular make provision for the planting of a replacement hedgerow to the re-aligned highway frontage boundaries of Rakeway Farm itself and the field to the north-west of Rakeway Farm, and for new hedgerow planting to

the boundaries of the proposed domestic gardens of Rakeway Farm and the barn conversion dwelling. Such hedgerows shall be composed of a minimum of six different suitable native shrub species. In addition, the submitted landscaping scheme shall make provision for the planting of a minimum of six irregularly spaced native standard hedgerow trees within the replacement field boundary hedgerow and a further minimum nine (in total) standard hedgerow trees within the replacement and new garden boundary hedgerows. Furthermore, the submitted landscaping scheme shall make provision for a minimum of three native and/or orchard trees within the garden to Rakeway Farm. The submitted landscaping scheme shall include full details of all proposed new trees, shrubs and any other planting, giving specification for species, positions, planting sizes and numbers/densities of all new planting. Following approval of the landscaping scheme submitted under this condition, the replacement hedgerow, including hedgerow trees, to the Rakeway Road frontage of the field shall be planted before the end of the then-current or next available dormant season (November to February inclusive) as the case may be immediately following the removal of the existing field hedgerow for highway visibility purposes, and the remainder of the approved landscaping scheme shall be fully implemented before the end of the first available dormant season following completion of the development hereby approved. The trees and shrubs etc planted in accordance with this landscaping scheme shall be properly maintained for a period of 5 years following planting. Any plants which within this period are damaged, become diseased, die, are removed or otherwise fail to establish shall be replaced during the next suitable season.

3. Hedgerows, including any hedgerow trees, planted in accordance with conditions of this planning permission shall be permanently retained for the life of the development hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed by the LPA.

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