

Committee Date: 23rd February 2012

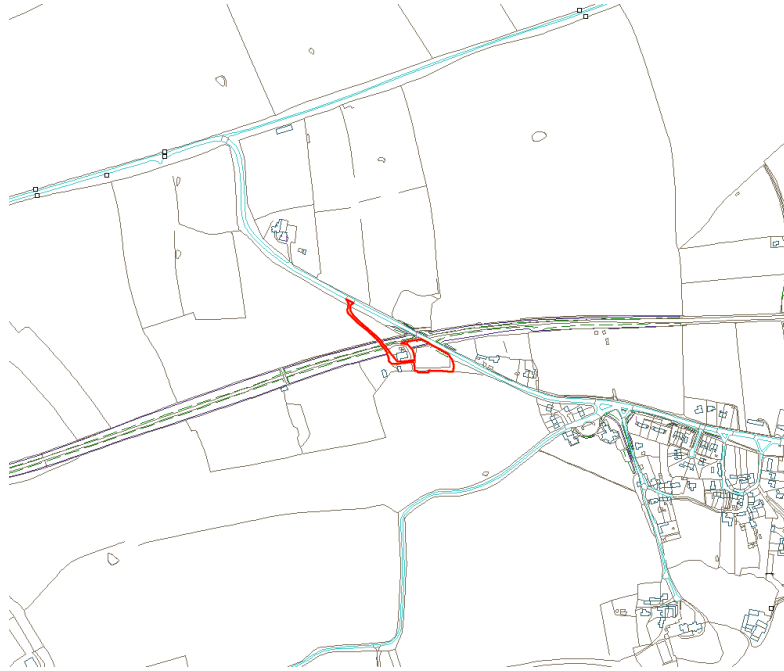
Reference: 11/00954/FUL

Date submitted: 21.12.2011

Applicant: Mr and Mrs R Field

Location: Strawberry Farm, 1 Melton Road, Wymondham LE14 2AR

Proposal: Construction of a new build two storey zero carbon dwelling



Proposal :-

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a 3 bed detached zero carbon dwelling as an exception to planning policy. The site is located on land associated with Strawberry Farm which sits within the open countryside on the outskirts of the village of Wymondham. It is proposed to site a dwelling within a small coppice of coniferous woodland and the dwelling has been designed around the concept of sustainable development in light of the policy requirements due to its location. The application has been supported by various reports relating to the proposals sustainability, environmental issues, protected species, landscape assessments, tree surveys and a comprehensive Design and Access statement along with detailed plans.

It is considered that the main issues for consideration of this proposal are:-

- **Compliance with policy – whether the development amounts to an ‘exceptional’ dwelling**
- **Sustainable Development**
- **Impact upon the countryside**

The Application is to be considered by the Development Committee due to the unique nature of the application and that the recommendation presents a departure from the approved policies of the Development Plan. Members may recall that committee resolved to refused the previous application considering that the location was not sustainable and that the proposal was not considered to comply with the definition of being an ‘exceptional dwelling’ as advocated within

PPS7. The applicants have supplemented the application with additional documents to assist the committee in their quest for a sustainable lifestyle.

Relevant History:-

10/00857/FUL – Erection of a 2 storey zero carbon dwelling, formation of garden, with use of existing vehicular access and pedestrian access onto Melton Road. Application refused 14.01.11 as it was considered that the nature of the development was not considered sufficient justification to allow the erection of an isolated dwelling in an unsustainable location.

Planning Policies:-

PPS 1 ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’ - The guidance says that planning should promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of development. The general theme of PPS1 is that the planning system should contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change. PPS1 seeks a reduction in energy use and emissions (specifically citing the encouragement of development which reduces the need to travel by private car), and also says that climate change impacts should be taken into account in the location and design of development. PPS1 requires local authorities to deliver development that is located in areas which reduce the need to travel by car and provide access to all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure, and community facilities. PPS1 suggests that the focus for development should be existing centres and discourages any new development which would impact negatively on the environment and actively discourages development which reduces the impacts of climate change. Whilst the location of new development continues to be key in this respect, new development should minimise the resources used by (for example) building housing at higher densities on previously developed land.

PPS 3 Housing - amplifies the advice set out in PPS1, and particularly says that housing should be developed in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. The priority for development in such locations should be previously developed land, where appropriate. However, PPS3 places a specific duty on local planning authorities to consider sustainability issues as some sites will not necessarily be suitable for housing. PPS3 also discusses the contribution that can be made to cutting carbon emissions by focusing new development in locations with good public transport accessibility and/or by means other than the private car and where it can readily and viably draw its energy supply from decentralised energy supply systems based on renewable and low-carbon forms of energy supply, or where there is clear potential for this to be realised.

PPS3 also sets out clear advice on determining planning applications, stating that we should have regard to the suitability of a site for housing (including its environmental sustainability) and that we should ensure that proposals are in line with housing objectives and do not undermine wider policy objectives.

PPS 7 – states that sustainable development is the core principle underpinning land use planning. Priority should be given to re-use of previously-developed sites and all development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness. PPS 7 reiterates PPS3 with regards to Housing in rural areas and should strictly control new house building (including single dwellings) in the countryside, away from established settlements or from areas allocated for housing in development plans.

However, paragraph 11 of PPS 7 does state **“Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example, in its use of materials, methods of construction to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise the standard of design more**

generally in rural areas. The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

PPS9: Biodiversity & Geological Conservation sets out the policies for the protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. It states that should a development pose potentially harmful aspects to the biodiversity or geology of the area ‘local authorities should use conditions and/or planning obligations to mitigate’.

East Midlands Regional Plan

Policy 1 – Regional Core Objectives – to secure the delivery of sustainable development within the East Midlands which includes a core objective to increase the regions biodiversity through the management and extension of existing habitats and to reduce the causes of climate change by minimising emissions of CO₂ by encouraging sustainable development and design.

Policy 2 – Promoting Better Design – states that the layout, design and construction of new development should be continuously improved, including terms of reducing CO₂ emissions.

Policy 3 – relates to the distribution of new development and states that development in rural areas should;

- maintain the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities;
- shortening journeys and facilitating access to jobs and services;
- strengthening rural enterprise and linkages between settlements and their hinterlands; and
- respecting the quality of the tranquillity, where that is recognised in planning documents

In assessing the suitability of sites for development priority is given to making best use of previously developed and vacant land or under-used buildings in urban or other sustainable locations, contributing to the achievement of a regional target of 60% of additional dwellings on previously developed land or through conversions.

Policy 39 sets out the Regional priorities for energy reduction and efficiency and states that Local Authorities should promote a reduction of energy usage in line with the ‘energy hierarchy’ and develop policies and proposals to secure a reduction in the need for energy through the location of development, site layout and building design.

Melton Local Plan (saved policies):

Policy OS2 - does not allow for development outside the town and village envelopes shown on the proposals map except for development essential to the operational requirements of agriculture and forestry, and small scale development for employment, recreation and tourism.

Policy BE1 - Siting and design of buildings: Allows for new buildings subject to criteria including the design harmonising with the surroundings, no adverse impact on neighbouring properties by loss of privacy or outlook, adequate space around and between buildings being provided and adequate access and parking arrangements being made.

Melton LDF Core Strategy: seeks to focus development in Melton Mowbray with a small balance (20%) in the surrounding Borough, with provision/contribution of 40% affordable housing from all developments and meets local needs by addressing identified imbalances in housing stock in all location. The Core Strategy also looks at tackling climate change and considered that focusing development within Melton Mowbray we will be directly influencing energy use and emissions by reducing the need to travel and that development in isolated locations, where people rely on the private motor car for their travel needs are poor locations for development, even if other measures are taken to mitigate or adapt to climate change. The Core Strategy states that new development should be of high quality and inclusive design.

Consultations:-

Consultation reply	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p>Highway Authority – Objects</p> <p>The location of the site is such that it is likely to encourage mainly car borne traffic, and is therefore contrary to the County Council's 'Highway Development Control Policy' which seeks to ensure that development is only permitted in areas where there is a choice of safe and accessible methods of transport for all road users (including pedestrians and cyclists).</p>	<p>It is proposed to use the existing vehicular access to the farm which is sited approximately 230 metres away from the edge of the village of Wymondham, where there is a lit public footpath leading into the village. It is proposed to install a pedestrian access from the dwelling through the coppice to Melton Road which will be less than 100 metres away from the start of the lit highway and pedestrian pavement. The applicants are willing to enter into an agreement with the Highways Authority to improve the existing footpath on the eastern side of the carriageway to link to the site with the village if this is required.</p> <p>The village of Wymondham has been categorised as a category 2 village through the formulation of the Preferred Options Core Strategy because it has a level of public services to support the residents. The village has a small shop/post office, public house, school and is served by a regular bus service. The site is not so far removed from the village in that its location would discourage walking and cycling to access the services available.</p> <p>It is considered that in this instance the recommendation should depart from the advice from the Highways Authority as it can be demonstrated that the site is not so remote from the lit highway and the village boundary to render walking and cycling as unsafe.</p>
<p>Wymondham and Edmondthorpe Parish Council</p> <p>The Parish Council object to the proposal, considering it outside of the village envelope.</p>	<p>Noted. The development plan policy OS2 seeks to restrict residential development outside of the Village and Town envelopes except in such circumstances relating to agricultural workers dwelling or tourism. The dwelling proposed does not fulfil the policy requirement of OS2 and has been applied for under the provisions of PPS7 as having special justification due to its innovative design and green credentials: Reducing energy demand, having energy efficient systems and appliances and making use of low or zero carbon technologies.</p>

<p>LCC Ecology – No Comments received to date.</p>	<p>The application site is contained within a small coppice of woodland which is currently used for storage of agricultural equipment. The application was supported with a comprehensive Protected Species Survey where it concluded that there were none present on the site.</p> <p>Strawberry farm is said to be an ecologically led farming venture that has National recognition for the work undertaken at the farm. Notably it informs the national ringing data set for the British Trust for Ornithology and the applicant's family have been recognised for the contribution to farmland conservation by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. The applicants are both working within organisations related to wildlife, specifically attached to farming practices and this site would aid them in their future studies.</p> <p>This is a resubmission of an earlier proposal which was refused on sustainable location grounds only. However no objection was received by the Ecology department when considering the earlier proposal.</p>
<p>MBC Environment Health Officer – No objections</p> <p>Recommends that an appropriate soil investigation is carried out in order to ensure that no risk arises from contamination at the site; in particular the garden area. In addition, Wymondham is an area in which Building Control would require full radon protection measures and would anticipate the implementation of such measures would in any case also serve to protect the building against any ground gas.</p>	<p>An Environmental Desk Study had been carried out prior to submission of the application it has concluded that there is a low/moderate risk to contamination resulting from the agricultural operations. It has been recommended that should approval be granted that the existing topsoil and subsoil reserves at the site are to be utilised within the residential garden and that shallow intrusive investigation be carried out to assess the potential presence of phytotoxic and fuel/lubricant compounds. A condition is therefore considered to be appropriate should planning approval be granted.</p>

Representations:

A site notice and press notice was posted and neighbouring properties consulted. As a result one letter of support has been received to date.

Representation Supporting the Proposal	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p>Ecology - A project of ecological interest such as this should be encouraged, especially where one of the applicants is local to the village.</p> <p>Energy Saving - In these times of energy saving, a project such as this is something to be promoted, it goes well beyond the current environmental requirements for new builds, and we see it as a great asset not only to our village community, but also for our local council to be seen to be encouraging such a project.</p>	<p>Noted. Discussed further below.</p>

Other material considerations (not raised through consultation or representation)

Consideration	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p data-bbox="231 351 785 405">Application of Development Plan and other planning policy.</p> <p data-bbox="231 439 785 582">Policy OS2 carries a general presumption against development outside town and village envelopes except in certain instances such as development essential for agriculture and forestry, small scale employment, tourism and recreation development.</p> <p data-bbox="231 853 785 1355">PPS7 supports OS2 in restricting development in the open countryside. However, paragraph 11 of PPS 7 states that; “Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house by providing this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example, in its use of materials, methods of construction to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise the standard of design more generally in rural areas. The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area.”</p> <p data-bbox="231 1776 507 1803">Sustainable Credentials:</p>	<p data-bbox="812 351 1359 465">The proposal is seeking approval under the provision contained within PPS7 as an innovative and exceptional dwelling of which there is no support within the local plan policy OS2.</p> <p data-bbox="812 499 1359 819">The site is located in the open countryside and the dwelling is not proposed to be for recreation, tourism or for the essential requirements of an agricultural or forestry worker therefore failing to comply with the policy OS2. However the dwelling benefits from being sited within the existing farm complex; to aid in its construction and heating; using the materials and waste product from the farm but also provides the ideal setting for the applicants to continue there conservation work of which they have received national recognition for.</p> <p data-bbox="812 853 1359 967">PPS 7 as stated opposite does, very occasionally, allow an exception to this principle and gives Local Authorities the capacity to grant isolated dwelling in the open countryside.</p> <p data-bbox="812 1001 1359 1120">This application has been submitted on this basis and the applicant is justifying the erection of a dwelling in this location on the unique nature of this proposal. The dwelling is proposed to be;</p> <ul data-bbox="858 1153 1359 1742" style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hi-tech Lifestyle Design conforming to Life Time Homes ▪ Enhancement of wildlife through Biodiversity ▪ Sensitively designed for the local environment ▪ Renewable Biomass heat and power ▪ Reed bed drainage and rainwater harvesting ▪ Conformity with PPS7 ▪ Enhanced Tree and landscape Management ▪ Materials sourced locally and from the existing site: the use of a locally sourced recycled Dutch barn for the frame and straw bales produced from the farm itself ▪ A special chance to demonstrate cutting edge technology and maximum sustainability ▪ Providing education and information at a local and national level. <p data-bbox="812 1776 1359 1946">The applicant has stated that the house will demonstrate complete and total sustainability, through the use of local materials and combining existing cutting edge technology to provide the services required. It will also allow the applicants to live in a sustainable manner of which they fully</p>

	<p>support. They state that the building has been designed in appreciation of the surrounding agricultural uses and will manage the coppice of trees aiding to increasing the ecology significances of the area. Further landscaping enhancements will take place within the site and along the neighbouring field boundaries which respects the character of the landscape.</p> <p>Water; Water supply for drinking and washing will be obtained from connections to the existing utility services which already supply the farm. Rainwater will be harvested and stored on site along with waste water (grey water) which will be recycled from baths, showers and other washing facilities and would be stored and pumped back into the house for use in w.c and secondary units.</p> <p>Drainage and Waste; will be collected in an on-site treatment tank, the non organic liquid will then be fed into a reed bed system, with the solids requiring periodic pumping via a collection vehicle.</p> <p>Space Heating & Hot Water; The dwelling has been designed to ensure that maximum solar gain can be achieved with the use of full glazing on the south elevation and smaller windows on the north elevation to reduce heat loss. Through the use of the highly insulated fabric, reduction of unnecessary energy consumption and maximising passive gains, along with the use of biomass boiler, the carbon emissions from space heating and domestic hot water have been reduced from 90% (typical building) to 51%. This is a considerable reduction. The heating will mainly be provided through passive solar gain which has been maximised through the design of the dwelling. There will be a need for additional heating in the height of winter and this is to be provided from a bio mass boiler. At present 2 options have been presented. Either connect into the existing dwellings bio mass boiler which uses the waste bi-product from the commercial crop farming or install a small scale bio mass boiler within the proposed dwelling. Woodchip/pellets could be produced solely from wood within the immediate vicinity of the property which could also be used as fuel.</p> <p>Electricity:- Photo voltaic panels (electricity) and solar collecting tubes (water heating) are to be installed along the south facing elevation. Previously they were to be stand alone in front of the building however they have now been incorporated within the design of the build and also serve a dual purpose. Not only will they produce the small amount of electricity required for the</p>
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<p>Design:</p>	<p>dwelling with the surplus being fed back to the national grid, they will also act as brise soleil to the ground floor windows to prevent excessive heating from passive solar.</p> <p>The concrete needed for the thermal mass in the sunspace and floor construction will be supplemented with recycled slag ash to minimise the concrete content; combined with the use of insulated form work means the amount of concrete will be reduced to the minimum.</p> <p>It is considered that a significant asset for the scheme is its proposal to use main construction materials sourced within the locality of the site. The straw required for the construction of the walls will come from the farm itself with the dutch barn frame also being sourced locally. The use of recycled components reduces CO² from not having to have items manufactured. The applicants are committed to making this self build as environmentally friendly as possible by reusing where possible construction material such as second hand bricks and pavers, reused wooden beams and planks for flooring but also internal fittings where appropriate. This is significant in terms of demonstrating that a sustainable form of construction can be achieved at relatively low cost and using locally available materials.</p> <p>The concepts for the dwelling are considered to introduce new technology and address sustainability issues in the form of new development. In this respect the building does meet the criteria set out in paragraph 11 of PPS7 with regards to its methods of construction and its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment.</p> <p>To be considered as an exception to PPS 7 paragraph 11 the design is a key factor. The dwellinghouse is a compact plan but one which exploits natural light and space, while ensuring that full benefit of passive energy is achieved. The house takes the form of a simple yet iconic form – the dutch barn. This build is essentially simple and relies on robust, clearly defined detailing between the various elements of the building fabric.</p> <p>The proposed dwelling will be constructed from low carbon and easily obtainable materials with the use of a locally sourced recycled dutch barn for the frame and straw bales produced from the farm which will have a lime rendered finish for the walls. Concerns were raised previously by the committee as to the appropriateness of the use of dutch barn as</p>
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	<p>a basis for the design and the applicant has provided further justification as to why this type of structure has been chosen in favour of using more conventional methods. Examples of dutch barns have been provided from locations within the borough which shows that they are a typical feature within the landscape. It is the intention to create a dwelling which has ties with the existing farming activities therefore the appearance of a barn structure fits well within the setting of the farm. The render applied to the external walls will be coloured to give the visual appearance of straw bales when viewed from any distant vantage point.</p> <p>The overall scale of the dwelling will depend upon the size of the Dutch barn sourced but the typical measurements are up to the height of 8.5 metres with a width between 16.5 metres to 18.5 metres having a depth of between 8.2m to 10.2 metres.</p> <p>The proposed dwelling has a modern design and in line with PPS7 the concept of the dwelling has been material and location led. The applicant in their supporting statement has stated that the building has been designed in appreciation of the surrounding agricultural uses with the objective of being read as a group of buildings to the farm. The primary purpose of the design is to provide zero carbon emission living and to create an entirely sustainable environment at an affordable cost. The dwelling has been designed to surpass all current building regulations in regard to energy and efficiency. The use of highly insulated thermally efficient fabric and making the most of passive design strategies ensures that the buildings energy requirements have been reduced to levels much lower than required by current regulations and successfully demonstrates achieving a Code for Sustainable Homes level 5.</p> <p>PPS7 paragraph 11 enables Local Authorities to very occasionally grant permission for isolated new houses provided that the design is truly outstanding and ground-breaking. This includes methods of construction and contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment. Whilst it can be argued that the dwelling itself in the use of materials and that it would have zero carbon emissions is satisfying the environmental strand of this exception policy the overall appearance of the dwelling is more subjective.</p> <p>The previous application was presented to the Leicestershire Design Review panel for comment. It was not considered necessary this time round as the comments are still relevant to this proposal as there have been minimal changes to the overall design but</p>
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<p>PPS1 and PPS3 strongly supports the location of development within existing settlements and requires local authorities to deliver development that is located in areas which reduce the need to travel by car and provide access to all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure, and community facilities. Both guidance's support development that reduces energy emissions and climate change but the emphasis is on locations which reduces the need to travel by private car.</p> <p>Core Strategy looks at tackling climate change and considered that focusing development within Melton Mowbray we will be directly influencing energy use and emissions by reducing the need to</p>	<p>increased landscaping enhancements have been brought forward. The panel considered the design to be individual, bold and modern, which was very much welcomed. It was considered that the use of the dutch barn was interesting which gave the house a strange sort of pastiche of a traditional barn, which is exactly the look the applicants are trying to achieve given its location.</p> <p>The policy advises that the value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area. There is no doubt that the design can be considered as modern architecture; the supporting information has shown other examples of curved roofed buildings which have been considered to have architectural merit.</p> <p>The proposal introduces enhancements to the site and surrounding landscaping through additional tree and hedgerow planting. The farm yard is also to be improved by clearing away waste and repositioning the storage for agricultural machinery. A comprehensive landscaping assessment has been undertaken and outlines how the improvements support the boroughs landscape assessments for this area and ultimately how the proposal can meet with PPS7.</p> <p>The proposal is considered to be innovative in its construction materials and has been designed led. The fact that the dwelling is modest in comparison with other proposal that have passed the policy test should be a consideration in that it could be replicated elsewhere within a rural landscape. An objective of the policy is to seek high quality design in rural places.</p> <p>Whilst the concept and principles behind a sustainable house can be supported the physical location of the development also need to be considered. The proposal would be located on the very edge of the village of Wymondham within a quarter of a mile of the village centre. Wymondham has been categorised as a '2' through the formulation of the Core Strategy which is considered to be a sustainable location and capable of supporting new residential development within the built form of the village. Whilst the site is not located within the village boundary it is not so far removed to be considered entirely an unsustainable location. Furthermore footpath and cycling links have been proposed and will provide alternative modes of transport into the village. It would be</p>
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<p>travel and that development in isolated locations, where people rely on the private motor car for their travel needs are poor locations for development, even if other measures are taken to mitigate or adapt to climate change</p> <p>Draft National Planning Policy Framework:</p> <p>The Government released for consultation purposes a review of National Planning Policy in July 2011 and has stated that it should be taken into account as a material consideration. This included some amendments to existing national policy that relate to this application.</p> <p>There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. A primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent development.</p> <p>In the case of isolated dwellings the advice states that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the exceptional quality or the innovative nature of the design of the dwelling. Such a design should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas - reflect the highest standards in architecture - significantly enhance its immediate setting; and - be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. 	<p>impossible to eliminate car borne trips but the reliance on the motor car would be lessened because of the close proximity to the village and the public transport links.</p> <p>It is considered that the content of the NPPF can only be afforded minimal weight given that it is at its early stage of production and there are no guarantees that it will be adopted in the form they take in the consultation document. However the draft implies that proposal of this nature can be granted if they are considered to be truly outstanding or (my emphasis) innovative. Reference to 'contemporary' architecture has also been removed.</p> <p>The proposal is considered to be ground breaking in the technologies that it will employ which has been design led. The removal of the reference to contemporary architecture is a considerable shift in that it implies a move away from aesthetics, which is often subjective, in favour of quality. There is no doubt that the proposal is of high quality modern design and innovative in its approach to its sustainable credentials, creating a carbon neutral dwelling throughout its life span.</p>
<p>Sustainable Development</p>	<p>The application has been supported with a Sustainability Statement which provides an overview of the how sustainability and energy efficiency will be actively promoted and incorporated into the design; and how the environmental impact of the development both during construction and through its occupation will be minimised. Through employing the energy hierarchy:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing energy demand • Energy efficient systems and appliances • And making use of low or zero carbon technologies <p>The proposed dwelling will surpass all current building regulations in regard to energy and efficiency. The development will be zero carbon.</p>
<p>Impact on the Open Countryside</p>	

<p>Melton's Landscape and Character Assessment key characteristics:-</p> <p>Farmland Patchwork: A gentle rolling lowland mixed farmland landscape with a distinct patchwork of small to medium scale regular shaped pastoral and arable fields with blocks of game cover and woodland areas.</p>	<p>The previous application was considered to not have a detrimental impact upon the countryside location and this did not form a reason for refusal. However the applicants are keen to demonstrate how the proposal can improve the distinctive character of the area. A comprehensive landscaping assessment has been provided which has been informed using the national, regional and the local character landscape assessments.</p> <p>The area is considered to be 'farmland patchwork' and displays many of the key characteristics as stated within the boroughs landscape assessment. The dwelling would be sited along the southern boundary of the copse adjoining the arable farm land. The site can only be viewed from across the field (south) and would be read against the back drop of the existing trees reducing the visual impact of the dwelling. The applicants intend to introduce additional tree planting along this field boundary and within the site; and supplementary planting to the hedge along the northern boundary.</p> <p>The area is not devoid of buildings as there is a large agricultural barn to the east along with the existing farm dwelling. To enhance the area further agricultural machinery currently store within the yard and wooded area will be relocated and the area tidied.</p> <p>It is considered that the dwelling would not have a detrimental impact upon the open countryside and would be read as a group of buildings within the farm setting. Further enhancements of the site are planed and show a commitment from the applicants to provide a development which is respectful and sensitive of its location.</p>
<p>Impact on residential amenity</p>	<p>The existing farm dwelling on the site is located to the west of the site set apart by a distance of 55 metres. The site is located in an isolated position and some distance from the nearest residential dwelling. It is therefore not considered that the proposal will adversely affect the residential amenities of any nearby properties.</p>
<p>Ecology and Conservation:-</p>	<p>Both applicants work within organisations related to wildlife, specifically attached to working farm practices. Whilst it has been acknowledged that this does not tie them specifically to this site, the location of the proposed dwelling will allow them to use their surroundings as a research tool for their occupations.</p> <p>Dr Fields has provided a statement regarding his occupation which involves the study of impacts of land management on greenhouse gas emissions,</p>

	<p>particularly from agricultural and upland landscapes. To be able to construct a zero/low emission dwelling on this site will enable him to have a valuable insight into the impacts of lowering carbon dependency on rural communities.</p> <p>A tree survey has been submitted which supports the cutting down of some of the poorer species on the site to allow for the construction of the dwelling and planting of native species. It is proposed to clearout all of the debris within the coppice which will have a positive effect on the existing ecology within the site. It is intended to plant more trees within the area providing habitats and creating new ecological features which would add to the ecological value of the site encouraging greater diversity.</p> <p>The applicants are keen to promote the site as a beacon for good practice and it is proposed to open up the site to other farmers and interested parties to view the results first hand. The applicants would agree to a legal agreement imposing this should the Council regard this as an important part of the proposal.</p> <p>It is stated in the applicants supporting information that the site currently supports a healthy population of typical; but declining, farmland birds species and participates in a bird ringing programme with the British Trust for Ornithology and contributes to the national ringing data set. Recognition has been achieved with the Farming and Advisory group for the continual conservation of the disused railway which runs through the site which has provided a rich ecological value for the site. It is stated that this work will continue and the sensitive development of the site will enhance further the ecological value.</p>
<p>Local Housing Need</p> <p>The Melton Borough Housing Stock Analysis 2006 – 2011 has found that within the Rural East of the borough, there is limited need for additional market housing to 2011. The need for additional market housing that does exist in the area relates mainly to the need for additional smaller units as there is a significant surplus of larger sized properties in the area. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Analysis Report supports these findings.</p>	<p>The application seeks consent for the creation of a two storey, 3 bedroom “sustainable eco-house”. The dwelling has also been designed to comply with the Life Time Home criteria so that the occupants life time needs can be accommodated without the need to move, which is a policy objective of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>The size of the dwelling does not have policy support as it is considered to add to the local imbalance of the housing market through the further addition of a larger property; and as such is considered inappropriate. However, an assessment is needed as to whether housing need is considered to be a ground for refusal since the application</p>

	relates to an 'exceptional' dwelling. The size of the dwelling has largely been dictated by the passive solar design and the need for large open areas for circulation.
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Conclusion

The application represents a departure from the development plan and can only be approved if exceptional circumstances are present that justify a development contrary to the national and local development framework. The applicant has tried to demonstrate that the exceptional circumstances stated in paragraph 11 of PPS7 allow for this development and the Committee is invited to consider if these are sufficient.

PPS7 allows for the very occasional granting of truly outstanding and ground-breaking design. The house has been designed to be zero carbon using sustainable materials sourced locally and be ecologically friendly and as such seeks to qualify within with this 'exceptions policy'. The design has been led by the desire to build a functional dwelling enabling it to be carbon neutral. It is considered to be innovative in its approach in using straw bales for insulation and a recycled Dutch barn to remain in keeping with the agricultural links on the site. The environmental enhancement proposed will ensure that the dwelling is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area as identified within the local landscape character assessments. The proposal is considered to comply with 'special' objectives of PPS7 and should be granted approval as an exceptional dwelling through the use of green credentials and land management of the site.

RECOMMENDATION:- Approval subject to conditions.

1. The development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. Notwithstanding the details of the materials noted in the application no development shall be commenced until details of the external materials to be used have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The re-development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
3. The landscaping enhancements to the site shall be carried out in accordance with those details submitted within the Design and Access Statement by LDA Design.
4. The approved landscape scheme (both hard and soft) shall be carried out before the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

5. In this condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars; and paragraphs (a) and (b) below shall have effect until the expiration of 5 years from (the date of the occupation of the building for its permitted use).
 - (a) No retained tree or hedgerow shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the local planning authority. Any topping or lopping approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard (3998 (Tree Work)).
 - (b) If any retained tree or hedgerow is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time as may be specified in writing by the local planning authority.
 - (c) The erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree or hedgerow shall be in place before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made, without the written consent of the local planning authority.
6. No development shall commence on site until all existing trees that are to be retained have been securely fenced off by the erection of post and rail fencing to coincide with the canopy of the tree(s), or other fencing as may be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, to comply with BS5837. In addition all hedgerows that are to be retained shall be protected similarly by fencing erected at least 1m from the hedgerow. Within the fenced off areas there shall be no alteration to ground levels, no compaction of the soil, no stacking or storing of any materials and any service trenches shall be dug and backfilled by hand. Any tree roots with a diameter of 5 cms or more shall be left unsevered.
7. No development shall take place until details of the rainwater re-cycling system, the photo voltaic panels, the whole house passive ventilation system and the straw/wood-chip burning boiler installations have been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These systems and installations shall be incorporated into the building as approved.
8. Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby approved, details shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority, for approval, to demonstrate how the applicant intends promote the development to interested third parties to educate such persons on the application of sustainable building, land management and ecological practices as used in the development.
9. Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 as amended (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order) in respect of the dwelling hereby permitted no development as specified in Classes A-F, shall be carried out unless planning permission has first been granted by the Local Planning Authority.

The reasons for the conditions are:-

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. The suggested materials are unacceptable. (Specify)
3. To ensure satisfactory landscaping is provided within a reasonable period.
4. To provide a reasonable period for the replacement of any planting.
5. To enable the Local Planning Authority to assess the effect of the development on existing trees and hedgerows in the interests of visual amenity.
6. To ensure that existing trees are adequately protected during construction in the interests of the visual amenities of the area.
7. To ensure that the sustainable credentials are achieved which has led to the granting of permission as an exception to policy.
8. In the interest of promotion of sustainable development and best practice.
9. To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain control over future extensions in view of the form and density of the development proposed.

Officer to contact: **Mrs Denise Knipe**

14th February 2012