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Your Ref:
Our Ref: gb_230113_Guilden Down

23 January 2013

Dear Julie

12/04651/EIA | Construction of four poultry sheds and feed bins, ancillary works, amendments to existing vehicular access, installation of solar photovoltaic panels and associated landscaping | Proposed Development Of Poultry Units North Of Guilden Down Clun Shropshire

The development is a substantial industrial scale building with an overall internal floor area of 9,018 sq metres and with its associated infrastructure and proposed access road it will have some negative impact upon the local landscape character of this area of the AONB. The proposed site is a green field location in a sensitive area of the Shropshire Hills AONB. Paragraph 115 of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework states that *"Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in ... Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty."*

However having studied the comprehensive documentation relating to the proposal and having had the benefit of visiting the site along with yourself and talking to the farmer and proposal team I would make the following comments and recommendations.

1. The site is well chosen to make maximum use of the topography in limiting its local and more distant visibility. It lies in a natural hollow masked to distant views by rising ground to the north, south and west. Similarly its local impact is limited both by the natural topography and the by the proposed landscaping and planting regime. There is some question in relation to the north western approach, along the bridleway and I fully agree with you that a photomontage is required as seen from c. (330379, 283229) in order to fully judge this specific impact.
2. The proposal makes more sense when looked at holistically in relation to the current and possible future environmental impact of the farming practice of Guilden Down. Currently large cereal transporters must access the farm via the narrow lane from Clun. This is clearly problematic as traffic has to pass through the town itself. The proposed dedicated farm road to the north, exiting onto the A488 Clun, north to Bishop's Castle will help to alleviate this problem. The creation of the proposed cycle of using on farm-grown grain to feed the chicken unit and manure from the unit as fertiliser will reduce transport needs and add greatly to the sustainability of the unit and both reduce carbon and noise pollution. Currently chicken manure is imported from north Herefordshire by trailer, passing through Clun to the south.
3. The offer of an improvement to the drainage of the hollow way, bridleway to the south east of the proposed unit (330696, 282953) is welcomed and if possible should be made a condition.
4. The small area of potential natural species woodland planting at (330285, 283341) approx. midway along the proposed access track is welcomed and should be included within the mitigation scheme. Similarly the strengthening of the conifer shelter belt with native broadleaf.

5. The proposed water collection scheme and reservoir to the immediate north of the proposed building offer further potential for associated marginal planting providing an enhanced habitat value and should be included within the mitigation scheme conditions.
6. The proposed PV panels are recommended to be of a non-reflective surface type.
7. The geology of the site makes for good drainage and shallow workable soil. Such conditions would have been desirable in the past for early habitation. The area of surface stripping for both the building and access road offer a window into potential archaeological deposits. It is therefore recommended that an archaeological walkover survey be undertaken in advance of works and that an archaeological watching brief is maintained during the ground stripping process.

I will not make a final decision on recommendation to the AONB Partnership until the western photomontage has been made available for consideration. However my feeling following the visit is to recommend that the AONB Partnership do not object to the scheme on the basis that the environmental benefits of the scheme outweigh the comparatively limited negative impact to the landscape of the AONB.

Yours sincerely

G Barratt
Landscape and Planning Officer, for
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.