

From: Jack Taylor <JackTaylor@woodlandtrust.org.uk>
Sent: 17 January 2024 14:13
To: Gillian McDermott; Planning - WDC; planning@malvern hills.gov.uk
Cc: campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Subject: FAO Gillian McDermott - Woodland Trust comments on application W/23/02112/OUT

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Dear Gillian McDermott,

Please find below the Woodland Trust's comments on the following application:

Reference: W/23/02112/OUT

Proposal: Planning application for the demolition of existing farmhouse, agricultural buildings and structures, the erection of a phased development of up to 300 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and associated public open space, drainage, infrastructure and engineering works with all matters reserved except access. | Orchard Farm, Defford Road, Pershore, WR10 3BX

The Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity and a leading voice in bringing to the attention of government, landowners and the general public the state of the UK's woods and trees. We are an evidence-led organisation, using existing policy and our conservation and planning expertise to assess the impacts of development on ancient woodland and veteran trees. Planning responses submitted by the Trust are based on a review of the information provided as part of a planning application.

We **hold concerns** around this application on account of the potential for deterioration of Tiddesley Wood SSSI (grid ref: SO930453), an area of ancient woodland designated as a mix of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and Plantation Ancient Woodland Site on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). This site is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated as an example of ash-maple woodland on heavy basic soils with a rich diversity of flora and fauna.

We understand that part owners of Tiddesley Wood, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, have expressed significant concerns about the impact of the proposals on the ancient woodland and the important features that give it SSSI status. We would also like to comment on the recreational disturbance and increased deterioration of the ancient woodland.

Firstly, we note the implementation of a significant buffer between the development and ancient woodland and acknowledge that the applicants have applied a larger buffer than the minimum required by Natural England. However, the main concern with this development is the facilitation of additional footfall within Tiddesley Wood due to the development's connection to an existing Public Right of Way that enters the ancient woodland on its eastern margin.

The applicants have sought to address this concern by using publicly accessible open green space between the development and ancient woodland. While in principle, this may act as a means of intercepting some footfall, the

distances involved will not be enough to deter people from accessing a woodland that by its nature is a very attractive location for residents, visitors and their pets. Not only would the SSSI ancient woodland become more open to the residents of a 300-dwelling development, but it would also facilitate additional parking and access for people from further afield. We have considered the proposed mitigation and consider that it does not instil enough confidence or provision for the ancient woodland to not be subject to increased adverse impact.

Protection for ancient woodland is outlined within National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 186c. This policy provides a test for developments and impact on ancient woodland. However, the test for impact is not a test of significance or magnitude, it is a test of whether there would be any negative impact. Therefore, any negative impact of any magnitude is relevant. We consider that the development is likely to increase disturbance within the ancient woodland during the operational life of the development and therefore contribute to its deterioration and so contravenes national planning policy designed to protect ancient woodland. We ask that the Council fully considers the potential impacts on the SSSI and ancient woodland and should only be satisfied where there would be no additional deterioration, no matter the magnitude.

We hope these comments are helpful. If you would like clarification or further advice please contact us via campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Best regards,
Jack

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