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Report from the Head of Development Management to Development Control Committee

Application number: 7/2025/4019

Application type: Full Planning application

Applicant: Mrs Rachel Oakley, National Trust

Location: Beckfoot Farm, Ennerdale, Cumbria, CA23 3AU

Grid reference: 310240, 516213

Proposal: Erection of two polytunnels to support small scale tree and flower cultivation for local use

Report prepared by: Kelsey Blain, Area Planner

Report agreed by: Kevin Richards, Planning Manager

Recommendation: APPROVE with conditions

1 About this report

- 1.1 The case planner has prepared this report, assessment and recommendation taking into account our policies (known as the Development Plan), written representations we have received, and any other material considerations.
- 1.2 Material considerations are things that are relevant to our decision making and which we are able to take into account – for example site specific factors, or Government planning policy (the National Planning

Policy Framework) and Government planning guidance (the National Planning Practice Guidance).

- 1.3 The Development Control Committee will determine the application at its meeting having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, representations we have received, and all other material considerations, following a verbal and visual summary of the application by the case planner and, where applicable, after hearing any verbal representations made in accordance with our Policy for Public Speaking at Meetings.
- 1.4 Most applications are decided under powers delegated to the Head of Development Management. A small number of significant or more contentious applications are considered by our Development Control Committee as set out in our Scheme of Delegation.

2 Background and proposals

- 2.1 This application is being reported to Committee as my recommendation to approve with conditions is contrary to the objections of Ennerdale and Kinniside Parish Council.
- 2.2 Planning permission is sought for the erection of 2 no. polytunnels within the garden of Beckfoot Farmhouse, a National Trust property located to the north of Ennerdale Water.
- 2.3 The proposals form part of the Wild Ennerdale project to increase tree cover within the valley and would be used to provide a small tree and flower nursery, for species of local provenance, to be used within the surrounding area.

3 Representations

- 3.1 Ennerdale and Kinniside Parish Council object to the application on the following grounds:

- Loss of residential use in the garden and commercialisation of the curtilage of a dwelling would alter its character and reduce its attractiveness and viability as a dwelling. Concerned this would represent a further erosion of local housing stock.
- The scale and nature of the development would create a quasi-industrial use within a residential setting, out of keeping with the character of the property and its surroundings. The development would not be incidental to the residential use.
- The structures would be visible from surrounding fells and higher ground from which this landscape is currently experienced as open, undeveloped and unspoilt. This would cause harm to visual amenity and special qualities of the National Park.
- There is considered to be no justification for the chosen location when alternative, less sensitive sites are available.
- Approval would set an undesirable precedent for the incremental commercialisation of residential properties. This could reduce housing availability and risks the gradual industrialisation of rural areas.

3.2 Cumberland Council have no comments to make on this application.

4 Development plan policies and other relevant guidance

4.1 The relevant Development Plan comprises:

- The Lake District National Park Local Plan 2020-2035

4.2 The following Lake District National Park Local Plan policies are relevant to this application:

- Policy 01: National and international significance of the Lake District
- Policy 02: Spatial strategy
- Policy 04: Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Policy 05: Protecting the spectacular landscape
- Policy 06: Design and development
- Policy 07: Historic environment

- Design Code Supplementary Planning Document
- Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4.4 There is no community plan in this area.

5 Main issues and assessment

5.1 The main issues in this assessment are:

- Principle
- Character and appearance of the area
- Biodiversity net gain

Principle

5.2 The application site lies within the domestic curtilage of Beckfoot Farmhouse, a residential dwelling located within the open countryside. Policy 02 (Spatial strategy) states that we will support proposals for development in the open countryside where, among other things, the application demonstrates it is necessary for and designed to support agricultural or forestry use.

5.3 While the proposals would be sited on domestic land, the nature of the proposed development would largely fall under forestry, with the polytunnels used as a tree nursery for the cultivation of local trees to be planted in the surrounding area. The cultivation of plants and wildflowers to diversify the floral attributes of the valley would align with the overarching aims of the development plan when read as a whole. In

particular, the National Park's first purpose to "conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage" and the aims of Policy 04 to "achieve bigger, better, more joined up and resilient habitats, and improve the function of ecosystems".

5.4 The Parish Council have expressed concern that the siting of polytunnels within the garden of Beckfoot would discourage the residential use of the dwelling in the future. Beckfoot Farm comprises a two storey farmhouse with an attached bank barn. The entire site has been owned by the National Trust since 1954 and has been used as a staff house, B&B, property office and tenanted let, but is currently vacant. No change of use of the main house or attached bank barn is proposed under this application. The proposed polytunnels are relatively lightweight structures which would be sited within a large garden and I do not consider that the scale or nature of the proposed development would prevent the continued use of the main house as a dwelling. The red line for this application has been drawn tight around the location of the proposed polytunnels, rather than the garden as a whole, and should the site be sold future owners would have the option of removing the structures. I do not consider that the proposed development would result in the loss of a dwelling or have any meaningful impact on the local housing stock.

5.5 The development is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Character and appearance of the area

5.6 The proposed polytunnels would be sited within the residential garden of Beckfoot, to the north of Ennerdale Water. The garden is relatively overgrown and contains an existing, small polytunnel and domestic oil tank. The site is enclosed by mature trees and hedges which run along the entire boundary. The dwelling's principal elevation faces west, into the site and has an attractive, balanced appearance, comprising rendered walls below a local slate roof with 6-pane sliding sashes. The

dwelling's side and rear elevations have been subject to various alterations and extensions and are of a less traditional appearance. The attached bank barn retains its traditional agricultural character and appearance.

5.7 The proposed polytunnels would have an area of 55 square metres each and a height of 2.5 metres and would be finished in a diffused polythene cover. Consideration was given to the use of a green cover, but this was discounted as it would not allow sufficient light into the structures for the intended use.

5.8 Whilst of a non-traditional character and appearance, the proposals would be sited within an enclosed site, close to existing built development and screened from public view. The development would not be visible from the bridleway to the south of the site (BW 407062) which runs along the lake shore, or the highway to the north of the site. Long distance views may be possible from the surrounding fells, but I am satisfied that at this distance the proposals would be viewed as a modest development which relates well to the existing building group and would therefore not detract from the character and appearance of the area.

5.9 I am satisfied that the development proposed is acceptable in terms of its impact on the character and appearance of the area and that it satisfies the requirements of Local Plan Policies 01, 02, 05, 06, the Design Code SPD and the NPPF.

Biodiversity net gain

5.10 Whilst the proposals would be sited within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse, the nature of the proposed development would not fall under a domestic use. As such, the development proposed is subject to the legal requirement to demonstrate BNG. Should permission be granted it will be subject to the mandatory BNG condition and a biodiversity net gain plan would need to be submitted and approved prior

to the commencement of development. An informative should be attached to the decision notice accordingly.

5.11 The submitted BNG information confirms that the required BNG units will be provided through the creation of a broadleaved woodland on an area of modified grassland to the north of the application site.

5.12 I consider that the proposed gains are significant and therefore a condition to secure the gains for a minimum period of 30 years is required.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Having regard to the provisions of the development plan, in particular Lake District National Park Local Plan Policies 01, 02, 04, 05, 06 and 07, the Design Code and Biodiversity SPDs and other material considerations (including the provisions of the NPPF), the development is considered to be acceptable, subject to the conditions recommended.

Recommendation: APPROVE with conditions

Conditions/Reasons

1 The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of THREE years from the date hereof.

REASON: Imposed in accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990.

2 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in conformity with the following submitted plans and details received by the Local Planning Authority:

Location Plan
Block Plan
First Tunnels Technical Specification
Application Form

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt.

- 3 The Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted for approval as required by the statutory Biodiversity condition, shall include a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the "HMMP") to include:
- (a) a non-technical summary;
 - (b) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
 - (c) a timetable for those works in (b) above to be carried out;
 - (d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
 - (e) the verification and monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat, including the timetable for such monitoring to be submitted to the local planning authority,

Notice in writing shall be given to the local planning authority when the:

- (a) HMMP has been implemented; and
- (b) habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed.

The enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP thereafter for a period of 30 years commencing from the date the local planning authority receives verification that the habitat creation and enhancement works have been completed.

Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

If verification or monitoring identifies that:

- the target habitat condition set out in the Biodiversity Gain Plan has not been reached within the timescale indicated, or
- the habitat has declined from its target condition within the 30 year period, then:
 - a scheme of remedial interventions to secure or resecure the target habitat condition, or
 - an alternative Biodiversity Gain Plan which delivers at least equivalent biodiversity net gain shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval.

REASON: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Policy 04 of the Lake District National Park Local Plan 2020-2035 and the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document. Schedule 7A requires that where an applicant relies upon a significant increase in onsite habitat biodiversity value, the habitat enhancement

should be maintained for at least 30 years after the development is completed.

NPPF decision notice requirements

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 Article 35(2) statement.

The Local Planning Authority did not identify problems arising in relation to dealing with the application.

INFORMATIVE - Biodiversity Net Gain

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition ("the biodiversity gain condition") that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Certain permissions are exempted by The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, but based on the information available this permission is considered not to be exempt so the biodiversity gain condition DOES apply. The approval of a biodiversity gain plan WILL therefore be required before development is begun, unless it can be demonstrated that the development benefits from a statutory exemption.

In summary: A biodiversity gain plan is required to be submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority before development may be begun.

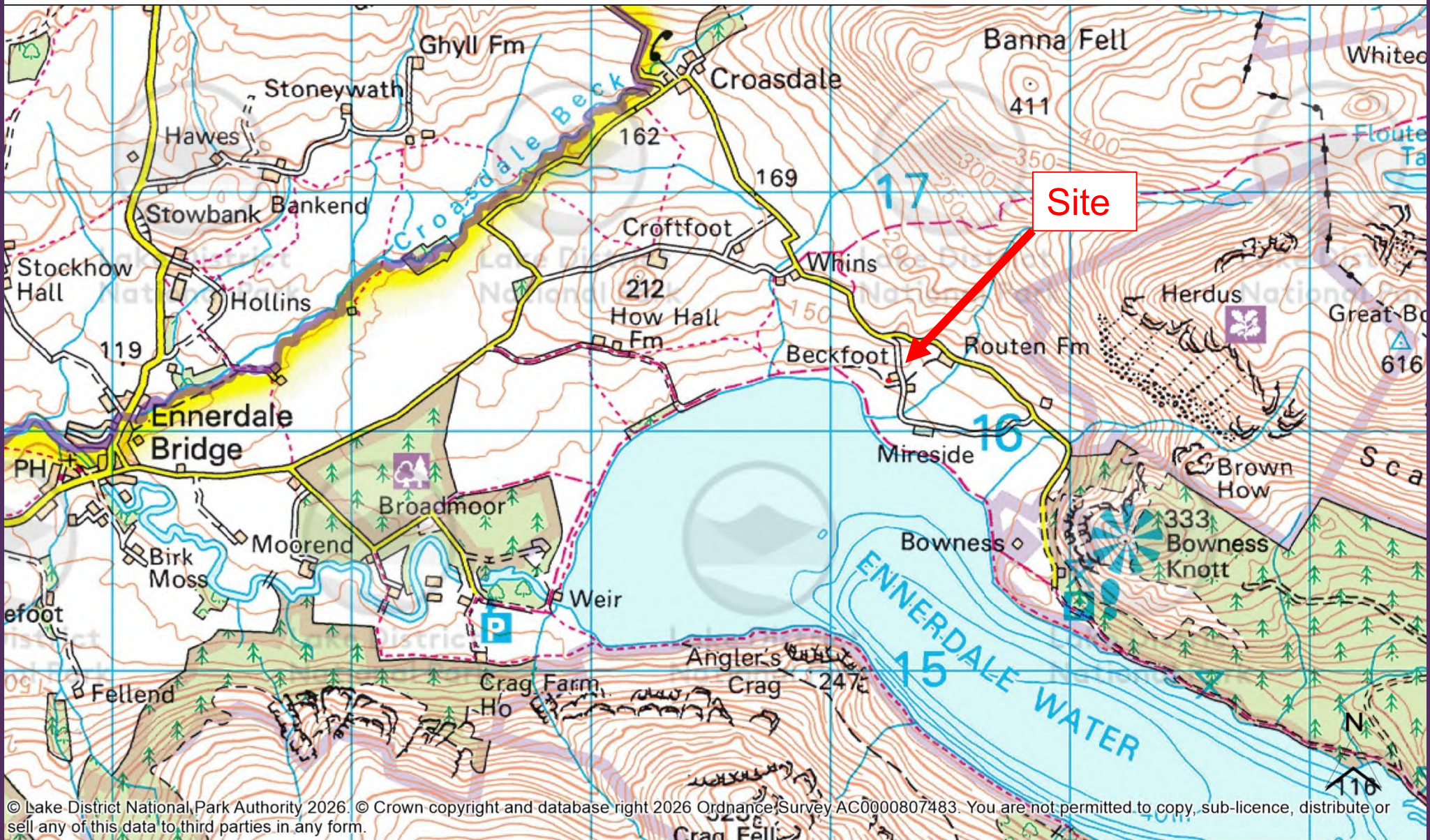
Background papers

Background papers are available for inspection on the planning application file unless otherwise specified on that file as confidential by reasons of financial/personal circumstances in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

7/2025/4019

Beckfoot Farm, Ennerdale, Cumbria, CA23 3AU

Erection of two polytunnels to support small scale tree and flower cultivation for local use



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Lake District
National Park Authority

Location Plan



Application Site





Proposed Plans

