

04/2006/003

MR G L BAKER

FORMATION OF ACCESS AND ERECTION OF 3 NO.1.5 STOREY TIMBER HOLIDAY CHALETS AT PADDOCKS, BICKENHALL, AS AMENDED BY LETTER DATED 15TH NOVEMBER 2006 WITH ATTACHED DRAWING NOS. 979/1A AND 979/2A

329073/118539

FULL

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the erection of three timber chalets for holiday letting accommodation, with each cabin to accommodate a maximum of 6 people. It is intended that most lettings would be to family groups or friends, with an interest in equestrian activities. Horses would be available on site for guests to ride, with guided pony trekking and horse riding being offered. There would also be the opportunity for guests to bring their own horses, as facilities already exist for the stabling of 18 horses.

The application has been amended by re-designing the layout and by proposed use of the existing access serving 'Paddocks' instead of the construction of a new vehicular access off the adjoining Drove.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the proposed development site is remote from any urban area and therefore distant from adequate services and facilities and there are no public transport services. As a consequence, occupiers of the new development are likely to be dependant on private vehicles for most of their daily needs. Such fostering of growth in the need to travel would be contrary to government advice. In detail it was originally proposed to access to the holiday chalets from/onto Curry Mallet Drove, which is classified as a definitive bridleway, which caused some concern to the Highway Authority and the Public Rights of Way Department. This has now been altered and proposal will utilise the existing access that serves Paddocks. Notwithstanding the aforementioned comments, it must be a matter for the Local Planning Authority to decide whether any other overriding planning need, outweighs the transport policies that seek to reduce reliance on the private car. WESSEX WATER recommends note.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER subject to detailed landscape plans being submitted, this amended scheme is more acceptable. RIGHTS OF WAY TEAM have spoken at length with colleagues at County Hall and we share the opinion that use of the bridleway T2/10 (Curry Mallet Drove) by vehicles to access the proposed development would cause conflict of interest. Rights of Way Section at County Hall would object to the use of T2/10 by vehicles. TOURISM OFFICER the Economic Development Unit remains concerned at the number of application for new holiday let units within Taunton Deane unless they are part of existing facilities on site. We

are aware that current figures provided by SW Tourism indicate that in Somerset holiday let business is only reaching 83% occupancy during high season and is as low as 40% in the low season. This clearly suggests that significant investment in new holiday let property is not the economic saviour that many applicants feel it will be. There is of course the danger that after a couple of years operation such units will have increased the indebtedness of the owners, and lead to a further application for units to be given full residential planning approval to enable their sale into an increasing value market. We would support proposals that seek to add facilities (e.g. swimming pools or other 'creature comforts') in order to differentiate them from the existing market, and enable a premium price to be charged for the accommodation. However, where new holiday let accommodation is concerned we would strongly urge that applicants be asked to provide an independent Market Assessment and/or a business plan (which can be provided by any professional land agent) that demonstrates a level of income over the year that provides a 'profit' on the venture sufficient to sustain the holiday let activity. If this is in doubt, we would urge that such application be refused on economic grounds. DRAINAGE OFFICER recommends notes.

PARISH COUNCIL (1) that if the application is to be construed simply as an application to build 3 holiday chalets, it should be refused as it is development outside a settlement and does not meet the requirements of policy S7; on the basis that the land is understood to be grade 3 agricultural land the proposal conflicts with policy S8, the proposal is remote from public transport links and therefore is inconsistent with policy S1; and it would set an undesirable precedent. (2) further, that if the application is to be considered as part of a larger project to establish a pony trekking centre based on 'Paddocks':- (a) TDBC be asked to consider whether that proposal itself should be the subject of a planning application; (b) any approval relating to the chalets should be related to and linked to the pony trekking business at 'Paddocks'; (c) the attention of TDBC be drawn to an inaccuracy on the location plan which does not identify land to the west of Curry Mallet Drove as being in the ownership of the applicant; (d) if it is minded to grant approval TDBC be asked to consider how any improvements to the Drove will be enforced given that the Drove does not appear to be in the ownership of the applicant; (e) the Council considers that the proposal would not fall within Policy EC21 as visitor pressure would cause harm to the natural heritage, namely the drove, which because of its clay structure could not cope with the substantial increase in use envisaged in the immediate locality, particularly if further units are added as mentioned in the business plan; (f) the Council objects to using the drove as the access point to the development as the junction of the drove with the maintained highway is hazardous at this point with limited visibility in one direction, and although traffic is currently light usage will increase if the development proceeds and it is understood that there have already been a number of "incidents"; (g) no indication has been given of how visitors horse boxes/horse HGV's will be accommodated; (h) clarification should be sought about proposals for a sand school/menage as it is understood that the scheme given approval is on the site of the. current application; (i) approval of the chalets would set an undesirable precedent for further units which would have an impact on the open landscape and would conflict with Policy EC24.

2 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- chalets are sited too far down the Drove; traffic will be intensified; the Drove should

remain as a bridleway; and the holiday chalets should be used solely as holiday accommodation and not as rented accommodation.

POLICY CONTEXT

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 and S2 seek to safeguard, inter alia, road safety, and visual amenity. Policy EC24 accepts holiday chalet developments where the proposal:- would not harm the landscape and would be adequately screened; provides for access and turning by transporter lorries; has good access to the main road network; and is not situated in a flood plain or an area at high risk of flooding.

ASSESSMENT

Whilst there is not any planning history associated with the use of the existing complex as commercial stabling, it is clear that the equestrian use has been operating as such for a number of years. Notwithstanding this however, the owner has confirmed that there would be no additional commercial use associated with the property, other than that associated with use by occupiers of the proposed chalets.

With regard to the Tourism Officers observations, a Business Plan and a Design and Access Statement have been submitted. The business plan clearly demonstrates that the chalets would be associated with horse riding activities, and accordingly the proposal ties in with the Tourism Officers remarks that "We would support proposals that seek to add facilities (e.g. swimming pools or other 'creature comforts') in order to differentiate them from the existing market and enable a premium price to be charged for the accommodation.

The proposal complies with all the criteria in relevant Policy EC24. In particular, the development would not be especially obtrusive, being well screened both from the main highway, and from the Drove. In addition, a landscaping condition would be imposed to further safeguard visual amenity.

Accordingly the proposal is considered acceptable with a condition to ensure removal if the business use is not successful.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials as application, landscaping scheme to be submitted, occupation to be restricted to bona fide holidaymakers, any chalet unoccupied for more than 24 months to be demolished.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposed development would not adversely affect road safety, or the landscape and would not therefore conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2 and EC24.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: 356465 MR J GRANT

NOTES: