

10/2004/021

MR D CROCKCROFT

ERECTION OF TWO HOLIDAY CHALETS AT LAND AT PAYE PLANTATION, STAPLEY AS AMENDED BY AGENTS LETTER DATED 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2004 WITH ATTACHED DRAWING NO. 8703/3B AND AGENTS LETTER DATED 12TH OCTOBER, 2004

18674/13411

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the erection of two timber holiday chalets with associated access track and parking within Paye Plantation. The site is located within an area that is a mix of conifer plantation, native scrub/woodland and Moorgrass and Rush pasture. There is an existing access track that runs east off the adjacent highway. The access to the Chalets would branch off this track through scrubland to the site of the chalets. A new reed bed water treatment area would be provided adjacent to the existing junction with the main road and a 200 mm deep swale would be formed to the west of the chalets to receive surface water run-off. The Chalets would have timber clad walls and the roof will be to Local Planning Authority requirements.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY no objections, views on amended plans awaited. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY no objections, views on amended plans awaited. ENGLISH NATURE no objection - (1) the site involved is not designated in any way for its wildlife or geological interest; (2) the ecological consultants report is fine as far as it goes but it does not appear to have been carried out at a time of year which enables the site to be assessed fully; (3) the consultants report clearly describes an important vegetation community (M25 in the National Vegetation Classification) as being present. This is of value, it is a habitat which is included in a Priority National Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP for purple moorgrass and rush pasture), the TDBC BAP lists purple moorgrass and rush pasture as a key habitat. M25 is listed as a habitat which should be protected (as part of Molinia meadows on clay and chalk) by Annex 1 of the Habitats. Directive 1994. The associated ditches also contain species of interest.(4) the report would also seem to indicate that this is not a particularly large or good example of M25, almost certainly due to lack of appropriate management. The report does however make the point that the survey was not carried out at the optimum time of year; (5) we would agree with the consultant that it is both possible and desirable to leave the area occupied by M25 and associated ditches free of development or the impacts of development. (6) we agree with the Somerset Wildlife Trusts suggestion, that a condition of planning permission to manage the remaining semi-natural habitat on the site (M25, ditches and scrub) appropriately in the future would be preferable; (7)it would appear from the plans supplied that the location of the buildings is about 30 m east of that recommended by the consultant and does in fact impinge upon the area of M25. Although there does appear to be some difference as to the exact location when comparing the maps supplied; (8) the consultants report indicates that the M25 area may contain populations

of adder, slowworm and newts. If this is the case then these species may also be found in the adjacent scrub. We note that no follow up survey has been done to establish whether the species in question are present or not and suggest such a survey is carried out before determination. The species involved are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.. SOMERSET ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD OFFICE there is no statutory or non-statutory sites or species recorded on the site.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the site is visually discrete and unlikely to impact on the surrounding landscape it is important that the scrub is maintained around the buildings. The Environmental recommendations contained within the submitted report must be followed. PROMOTION AND TOURISM OFFICER support this application, there is a current demand for more self-catering accommodation in this area. The accommodation should be independently inspected to ensure a high quality/standard of accommodation.

PARISH COUNCIL has strong objections to the proposal for the following reasons: - (1) this development would be out of context and in contravention of Policy of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where "small" and "unobtrusive" are development requirements; (2) there would be inevitable damage to the local flora and fauna - again contravening AONB Policy; (3) there would be extensive damage to local infrastructure during construction; (4) the proposed buildings appear to be larger than one would expect to see in a "holiday" context; (5) a survey - details not provided with your letter of 17 September 2004 - appears to have been carried out by someone whose qualifications have not been stated; (6) there has, allegedly, been correspondence between the applicant/his agent and various bodies e.g. the Environment Agency, Somerset Wildlife Trust etc. to which the Parish Council has not been privy; (7) it is feared that the granting of permission for two chalets at this time will lead to further requests, which will be difficult/impossible to resist, to expand the development; (8) my Council understands that Broadoak Building Design is involved in this project and, in view of this Company's "track record" on the Trents Farm development in Churchinford, it feels that the previous point is extremely relevant; (9) my Council understands that any new applications relating to "holiday lets" must be accompanied by evidence of research into the "need" for such accommodation. Has this evidence been provided in this case and, if so, might my Council have a sight of it? (10) if permission is granted, a condition excluding any expansion - in perpetuity - must be included.

7 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following points: - the site is within the centre of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in an unspoilt woodland area and will have a radical impact on the landscape and a detrimental impact on the local wildlife of the area; the Mire is an important habitat and will be damaged by the foul drainage of the proposal; the development could lead to new populations of badger coming into the area and this may bring TB into the area; there are dipper and kingfishers on the site along with numerous plants; the site is damp throughout the year and is a poor site for tourism accommodation with little local services (nearest shop is approximately 2 miles away); only two units is unlikely to be viable and more units will be needed in the future; the proposal would set a precedent for similar proposals in the area; there are natural springs in the area as exemplified by the continual road repair in the vicinity of Stapley and Biscombe Lane; access to the site is poor, via single width rural lanes, and additional lorries and cars along the roads and hamlet would cause disturbance and be unsafe; there is no turning for transporter lorries; new services such as electricity etc. will need to be laid and this will have a

detrimental impact on the area; the chalets are larger than those usually built for holiday use and are more akin to bungalows for permanent accommodation; the chalets should be near the applicants home; the site cannot be adequately screened from noise lights and other human habitation noise/disturbance; the Environmental Impact survey was done in February by a person with no qualifications or experience she states there is a three year re-growth period but this site was felled in 1994-1995 and the decision to replant should have been enforced; part of the Plantation is owned by a different person who is awaiting the outcome of this application before submitting one of his own.

2 LETTERS OF SUPPORT this type of proposal is much needed in this area; the site is secluded with good access and sensitive to environmental issues; having lived all our lives the proposal will be beneficial with extra trade for public houses, local shops etc.

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR6 (development in the Open Countryside), Policy 3 (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Policy 23 (tourism development in the Countryside) and Policy 49 (Transport Requirements for New Development).

Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policies S1 (general requirements), S8 (Outside Settlements), EC19 Proposals for static caravan sites and holiday chalet developments will only be permitted provided that the proposal: - (A) would not harm the landscape and be adequately screened; (B) provides for access and turning by transporter lorries; and (C) has good access to the main road network; and (D) within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty only small scale, unobtrusive developments will be permitted. EN10 (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), EN4a (Protected Species), M3a (Parking Requirements).

ASSESSMENT

The proposed chalets are within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where new development is strictly controlled. Policy EC19 allows for the provision of holiday chalets within AONB's provided they are small scale and unobtrusive. The proposal would utilise an existing track way off the highway. Whilst the driveway would be visible from the road the existing scrub and boundary trees would screen/soften the visual impact. It is proposed to introduce a reed bed on the land in the corner of the new drive, existing drive and highway and the reeds should produce an additional screen between the road and the drive. The proposed 3 bed roomed wood clad chalets would be screened from the highway by the existing roadside bank and trees and would fit into the woodland surroundings with minimal impact on the surrounding landscape. The chalets have been sited within the existing scrubland/woodland to avoid the more sensitive mire vegetation and the timing of development will be conditioned from March to September to avoid nesting birds and mammals. Construction details are also conditioned to ensure

environment friendly methods are adhered to. The proposal represents a small scale, unobtrusive development that is considered acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials, holiday accommodation only, construction methods (including access drives), no works to be carried out between October and March, retention and protection of the surrounding vegetation, wildlife survey for slow worms, adders and newts, parking, surface water drainage, no external lighting. Notes re permeable road surfaces and water butts; drawing of the necessary surface run off feature is required.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION:- The proposal represents a small scale, unobtrusive holiday chalet development in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policy EC19 and policy EC10.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: 356467 MRS J MOORE

NOTES: