

30/2006/007

TAUNTON RACECOURSE

CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO ENABLE CAR PARK TO BE USED AS A SITE FOR SUNDAY MARKET, INCLUDING REPOSITIONING OF VEHICULAR ACCESS AND ALTERATIONS TO PARKING LAYOUT, TAUNTON RACECOURSE, ORCHARD PORTMAN

323818/121749

FULL

PROPOSAL

The proposed site lies on the southern side of Taunton and consists of two fields to the west of the Racecourse and the B3170 used as the main car park to the racecourse. The site is bounded by mature field hedges and there is a central hedge dividing the parking area into two fields. The area is used on race days, around 15 days a year, and for car boot sales and other events using racecourse facilities. On race days the area accommodates between 1000 and 2000 vehicles. 14 car boot sales are held on this site and a further 14 being held in the centre of the racecourse per year during the summer months. Often in excess of 1000 vehicles use the site for such events.

The proposal entails the expansion of the car boot sales to allow for Sunday market facility throughout the year on the existing car park site. Relocation of the access further north to improve visibility is proposed, as is the alteration of the tracks and hardstanding area to improve facilities and circulation of traffic attracted to the site. The area of market is proposed for the southern area with the northern part of the site used for parking. The access and parking will be monitored by traffic stewards. It is considered that this use will aid the success of the racecourse and the economic well-being and public profile of the area.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the existing access to both the car park and racecourse are substandard and their arrangement erectly opposite each other results in inappropriate interaction, particularly on race days when the accesses are used by both pedestrians and vehicles. The proposal closes the existing vehicular access to the car park for vehicles and retains a pedestrian gateway. This is acceptable, but it enables pedestrians to cross into the racecourse at the most appropriate location and particularly on race days when this access is policed. The relocation of the vehicular access into the car park improves visibility for and of emerging vehicles to 4.5 m x 90 m, which is appropriate for 30 mph vehicle speeds. The relocation of this access provides for better visibility than that which exists at the present time and, although there is some hedge loss, creates a far better situation for vehicular access. The details of the alterations to access and provision of visibility splays shown on Drawing No. 05.66.11 A shall be the subject of a suitable condition in that they be provided prior to the new use taking place on the land. In addition, gates shall be set a minimum of 10m back from the adjacent carriageway level and

suitable drainage provided to ensure that water from the car park and access does not flow onto the public highway at either the vehicle or pedestrian access. The applicants have provided a report on existing and proposed uses. It can be seen from that that additional traffic will be generated by the development. However, I am assured that Sunday markets will be managed in such a way that queues on the public highway with vehicles waiting to come in will be minimised by having any barriers set as far away as possible from the entrance gate. It is clear that the development will generate additional traffic but it is my view that the highway network has sufficient capacity to cater for such a development, particularly as its use will not conflict with normal peak hour traffic flows and, in consequence, I do not propose to raise a highway objection to the development. RIGHTS OF WAY TEAM any change at all to the footpath – route, surface or furniture – must be checked/authorised by SCC. The footpath must remain open and unobstructed at all times even during works. RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION have examined the application and have no observations to make.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER given the slope of the site down to the west and open visibility to the north-west I recommend the existing hedgerows are managed to leave standard trees approximately every 10 m and that a new hedge be planted along the western limits of the hardstanding to help to break up the form of the car parking.

PARISH COUNCIL welcomes any proposal that will enhance safety. The present situation is not good with vehicles and pedestrians muddled up together. It is on race days that the worst situation exists, as on market days there are no pedestrians to cross the road. Why cannot the pedestrian access be moved to the south of the present stile to provide better segregation of vehicles and pedestrians, with stewards enforcing the use thereof? The Council is opposed to the loss of the hedgerow for the new entrance and are not persuaded that the proposal will achieve the desired objective. With the proposed access, vehicles proceeding to Corfe will turn across the traffic and then still be subjected to pedestrians crossing their path. Highways with their years of experience should design a traffic calming measure with a much enhanced road system to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

POLICY CONTEXT

RPG10 – Regional Planning Guidance for the South West

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR1 – Sustainable Development, STR6 – Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages, POLICY 5 – Landscape Character, POLICY 48 – Access and Parking, POLICY 49 – Transport Requirements of New Development.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 – General Requirements, S2 – Design, EN9 – Tree Planting, EN12 – Landscape Character Areas.

ASSESSMENT

The proposal is for an extension of the existing car boot sale use of the site to allow for a similar market type use on a Sunday throughout the year. The main

considerations with this case are the traffic safety issues, visual impact, siting and sustainability given the location.

The site is outside the settlement limits and involves the use of an existing car park and car boot site for a market type use on Sundays throughout the year. The market/car boot use will involve no permanent structures and only the use of vehicles and temporary stalls. As there is no built development proposed the development does not fall to be considered under Policy S7 of the Local Plan, although the site is outside settlement limits. The area is rural in character and in order to protect this character it is considered necessary to impose a condition requiring any stalls to be removed from the site from Monday to Saturday.

There is an argument for resisting this as an unsustainable location that will be car reliant. However the site is currently used for car boot sales on 14 days throughout the year and the site of the racecourse on the eastern side of the road is similarly used. If the current use is to be accepted in this location, which is outside the settlement limits, then a restriction on the whole of the racecourse site for further car boot sales is considered appropriate. This would limit the traffic increase in the area in sustainability terms and would also be safer as the access to the main racecourse is considerably less safe in terms of its highway access. While the use proposed would be more days a year than currently can take place, the economic well-being of the area and racecourse would benefit and there is no clear site closer to the town centre identified for such a use. It is not considered that this type of business on one day a week would undermine the retail use of the Town Centre.

The existing site has an access close to the footpath across the land and has limited visibility. In order to improve visibility in both directions and help segregate vehicles from pedestrians it is proposed to move the vehicular access some 32 m further north. This will give visibility splays of 4.5 m x 90 m and enable replanting of the hedgerow along this line which will more than make up for the small amount lost at the new access point. The existing access will be reduced in width, closed to vehicular traffic and used for pedestrians. The stile and route of the public footpath will remain unaltered. The alterations to the access proposed are considered to be a safety improvement as well as resulting in a reinstatement of hedges over and above the existing situation.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to no further representations raising new issues by 21st April, 2006 the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, no permanent structures or stalls on site, removal of temporary stalls Mondays to Saturdays, no use of the remainder of the racecourse for car boot/market uses at any time, visibility and landscaping. Notes re planting and footpath.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposal is considered not to detrimentally harm residential amenity or the character of the area and subject to conditions is considered to comply with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 and S2.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: 356398 MR G CLIFFORD

NOTES: