

20/2005/005

MILLFIELD NURSERIES LTD

ERECTION OF 5 NO. LOG CABINS FOR TOURISM/EDUCATION AT LAND AT MILLFIELD NURSERY, PARSONAGE LANE, KINGSTON ST MARY AS AMPLIFIED BY APPLICANTS LETTER DATED 4TH APRIL, 2005

22241/29200

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the erection of 5 log cabins. Two proposed log cabins measure 5.71 m x 8.81 m and 3.43 m to the ridge, incorporating two bedrooms and is of single storey construction. Two further 1 and 1 and a half storey log cabins measure 5.9 m x 8.4 m and 5.32 m to the ridge, incorporating two bedrooms with an open plan first floor with balcony within the roofspace. One further 1 and a half storey log cabins measures 7.71 m x 9.81 m and 5.32 m to the ridge, also incorporating two bedrooms with an open plan first floor with balcony within the roofspace. The design of each log cabin is typical for this form of development, incorporating natural timber walls and a tiled roof.

The site is located in the northern section of the nursery curtilage that is currently used for the cultivation of trees that are proposed to be retained. The nurseries existing access from Parsonage Lane is proposed to be used as well as an existing access drive through the nursery site. The latter driveway is proposed to be extended along the south west and north west boundaries of the site. The cabins are proposed to be fanned out across the site with a network of footpaths serving each unit linking them to the existing lake and parking facilities near the nursery entrance.

In response to the objection letters and Parish Council comments received, a letter dated 4th April, 2005 has been received from the applicant amplifying the proposal as follows. With regard to the Parish Council comments I can only reiterate that the aim is that "the car" will be discouraged. So far as I am aware there have been no incidents involving pedestrians or cyclists at the junction of Parsonage Lane and Kingston Road, or elsewhere in the village. Access to and from the site has been relatively trouble free for 14 years since we have been on the site. We have an average of 150 movements a day and have experienced just one minor incident at Mill Cross and none on Parsonage Lane. Somerset County Highways confirm that there have been no reported incidents at Mill Cross in the past 3 years. There are 3 passing places on Parsonage Lane adjacent to Mill Cross. One at the junction opposite Mill Corner, the second within 50 m and the third by the BT exchange. There are no recorded incidents relating to traffic reversing from Parsonage Lane onto Kingston Road during the past 3 years. On the matter of the concern raised by a neighbour regarding use of the existing swimming pool I can confirm that there is no intention to involve the pool in this project. The possible use of the pool was considered prior to formal application but the health and safety aspects were considered too onerous and the impact on the privacy of the occupants of Millfield House and others unacceptable. The pool, and area of lawn behind it, are for private domestic use only and do not form part of the application.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY no objections. The site experiences adequate visibility at the existing entrances onto Parsonage Lane for the usage proposed. However, my main concern is with the junction at Mill Cross, where visibility is adequate in a southerly direction but is restricted to approximately 30 m in a northerly direction within the 30 mph speed limit. I would normally expect to see visibility of 90 m within such a speed limit. However, the proposals do not substantially increase traffic flows when compared to the existing usage of the site, and therefore it would be unreasonable to recommend refusal on the visibility concern raised above. Although the location of this proposal is within an area that is unsustainable in transport terms (i.e. outside settlement limits), it is generally accepted that tourism creates its own traffic within these locations, and therefore I have no objections to this proposal in principle. However, I would expect to see designated parking for the proposed holiday accommodation. Although the proposals for 5 cabins do not substantially increase traffic at this location, any further development of the site would give me cause for concern in terms of highway safety. Therefore I would not wish to see any further development of the site without highway safety improvements. In response to the previous informal advice given to the siting of a Post Office at the nursery site; concern was raised as the perceived traffic movements associated with such a use would be far greater than holiday let use. Holiday let use would generate less traffic movements per day and would also be on a seasonal basis. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY no objections. WESSEX WATER no objections. The applicant must agree points to connect to WW infrastructure.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER no objections, subject to the retention of the existing planting, the site is well landscaped and should help to soften the impact of the proposed development. CONSERVATION OFFICER no objections, the area is well screened and with the retention of some trees will have no adverse impact on the Conservation Area. TOURISM are happy to support this application. Current demand supports this type of accommodation in this area and links to the Community Tourism Section of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Tourism Strategy. DRAINAGE OFFICER no objections, soakaways should be constructed in accordance with the relevant standards.

PARISH COUNCIL Objects to the proposal as the development is outside the settlement limits and contrary to policy KM2. Tourism is not consistent with the fragile nature of the Quantock AONB, the North Eastern end of this area is already subject to, and suffering from considerable pressures from adjoining villages. This application is not environmentally friendly or sustainable. The proposal conflicts with the Taunton Deane Local Plan Chapter 2 Strategy-Aims and objectives paragraph 2.5(v) that says "again the emphasis is on concentrating facilities within town centres and at other locations well served by public transport". The bus service is infrequent and there is no cycle route to Taunton. The Parish Council believes that the holiday visitors will predominantly use cars. Parsonage Lane is hazardous for cyclists and pedestrians due to the nature of the road and volume and speed of traffic. The location is not well served by public transport (TDLP-EC19). Parsonage Lane and the Mill cross junction is substandard and therefore contrary to policy EC19. The proposal may be a prelude to a larger development in the form of a holiday park or conversion to residential use which would be detrimental to the character of this area which is on the fringe of the Conservation Area. The Parish Council urges refusal of the application.

CHAIRMAN OF PARISH COUNCIL has written separately to the Parish Council comments in a letter dated 2nd April, 2005 highlighting that informal advice was given to the applicant, with regard to locating a post office on the site. That previous advice stated that the Highway Authority would resist any proposal for a post office on highway grounds.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR (STAPLEGROVE DIVISION) Elaine Waymouth telephoned to request that the issue regarding the previous County Highway comments relating to informal advice given regarding a Post Office be taken into consideration, (as raised in a letter dated from the Chairman of Kingston Parish Council dated 2nd April, 2005).

FIVE LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues; visual intrusion and the spoiling of views over the Quantocks and Blackdown Hills, increase in noise nuisance if the holiday makers use the applicants swimming pool and garden area, concern that the proposal may herald a full scale holiday camp by the addition of more log cabins, concern that the existing agricultural use of the land would be changed to residential that will be turned over to housing development, the proposal would greatly detract from the charm of the village, the landscape would be changed by the very nature of changing planted areas to holiday let buildings, access from main road networks is a serious concern, access is of serious concern as the turning off Kingston Road onto Parsonage Lane allows single vehicle access only and has a blind spot for entering and departing vehicles, Kingston Road is extremely unsafe and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists as it has no footpaths, cycle lanes, we have been involved in an accident last year at Mill Cross in which a speeding car skidded in the wet and struck out car whilst waiting at the junction to pull out, passing places or lighting and has urban speed limits, all lanes leading off Mill Cross are single lane with infrequent passing places, in peak summer months traffic frequently has to reverse back up Parsonage Lane towards Mill Cross to allow passing, peak agricultural months mean that associated traffic makes the lanes unsuitable for pedestrians and cyclists, lack of speed calming measures in Kingston St Mary is a concern for cyclists, the bus stop has an infrequent service to Taunton, the estimated 2 vehicle movements per day appears conservative as a car is required to access town and country, the current screening is insufficient, if this application is approved there should be some form of physical traffic control in the Kingston Road, the traffic at Millfield nursery would appear incompatible with a scheme for tourism, the proposed scheme can not be financially viable.

TWO LETTERS OF SUPPORT have been received from the same address.

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Structure Plan Review the following policies are considered relevant:- Policy STR1 on sustainable development is relevant. Policy STR6 states that development outside towns, rural centres and villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel. Policy 49 states that proposals for development should be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure and provide safe access to roads of adequate standard.

Taunton Deane Local Plan the following policies are considered especially relevant:- Policy S1 requires that proposals for development should ensure that: - (A) additional road traffic would not lead to overloading of access roads or road safety problems; (B) the accessibility of the site for public transport, walking, cycling, and pedestrians would minimise the need to use the car; (D) the appearance and character of any affected landscape, settlement, building or street scene would not be harmed as a result of the development; Policy S2 requires development to be of a good design; Policy S8 requires that outside development limits new buildings will only be allowed, amongst other criteria, that they accord with a specific Development Plan Policy and supports the viability and viability of the rural economy; Policy EC19 requires that proposals for holiday chalets will only be permitted provided that the proposal would not harm the landscape and be adequately screened and has good access to the main road network; Policy EN15 requires that development affecting a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it would enhance the appearance or character of the Conservation Area.

ASSESSMENT

The site lies outside the settlement limits of Kingston St Mary. However Policy S8 supports the principle of development where environmental quality is maintained/enhanced and the proposal accords with a specific Development Plan Policy, i.e. in this case Policy EC19 (holiday chalets). The site is well screened by mature trees on the north east and north west boundaries and there is an abundance of other trees within the site that are proposed to be retained. A landscaping condition is proposed to further bolster the screening of the development and a condition is also proposed for the developer to show precisely which trees are to be retained within the site. In terms of screening therefore the proposal accords with Policies S8 and EC19 and therefore the visual amenity of the area would not be detrimentally affected. The screening also provides an adequate buffer in relation to the adjacent Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which would be maintained/enhanced. The site is also located a significant distance away from the AONB and in visual terms, the development would be absorbed into the built up area of Kingston St Mary when viewed from the Quantock Hill.

The chalets are also located sufficient distance away from neighbouring properties not to cause any overlooking or overbearing affects and therefore the residential amenity of the area would not be detrimentally affected.

In order to satisfy the remaining criteria of policy EC19 the development should have good access to the main road network. The existing access to the site is located some 100m west of the Mill Cross junction with a main road that leads to Taunton and the Quantock Hills. This short distance to the highway network would therefore appear to satisfy the remaining criteria of Policy EC19.

Various representations have been received with regard to highway safety at Parsonage Lane and the junction at Mill Cross with Kingston Road. Whilst these comments are appreciated and understood, in the opinion of the Highway Authority, the proposals do not substantially increase traffic flows when compared to the existing usage of the site, and therefore it would be unreasonable to recommend refusal on

highway safety grounds. In response to the previous informal advice regarding the siting of a Post Office at the nursery site; concern was raised as the perceived traffic movements associated with such a use would be far greater than holiday let use. Holiday let use would generate less traffic movements per day and would also be on a seasonal basis.

As per the Highway Authority comments, it is generally accepted that tourism creates its own traffic within these countryside locations where public transport may be limited. This form of development is principally considered acceptable in this countryside location where development may be more reliant on the use of the car due to its promotion of the rural economy and accordance with policy EC19. Incidentally however, it is the applicants intention to promote the use of sustainable transport as much as possible. Furthermore this form of development is considered to accord with the Community Tourism section of the TDBC Tourism Strategy, one of the main aims of which is to maximise the economic opportunities and benefits of tourism.

Concern has also been raised that this proposal may be the start of additional similar proposals. The Highway Authority have commented however that any further increase in the number of units would require improvements to the Mill Cross junction that would be out of the ownership and therefore control of the applicant. The possibility of any future development of the site should not however form part of any consideration when determining this application that should be treated on its own merits.

Concern has also been raised that the proposal will lead to housing development. Any change of use of the holiday chalets would require the benefit of Planning Permission that would be resisted in this location due to the conflict with planning policy with regard to housing in this location. The latter would also apply to any future application for individual housing applications, however again this form of speculation should not form part of the determination of this proposal. Policy KM2, housing outside the settlement limits of Kingston St Mary is not therefore relevant to the proposal. A standard condition is proposed to restrict the occupation of the chalets to bona fide holidaymakers for individual periods not exceeding 4 weeks in any period of 12 weeks. The chalets could therefore not be rented out for residential purposes. It has also been confirmed that holidaymakers would not use the swimming pool or the garden area adjacent to the applicants house.

The proposal description mentions the use of the chalets for educational purposes as well. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority it is irrelevant that educational activities may be run at the site for the occupants of the chalets as the proposal is considered to accord with planning policy regardless. The proposal has been considered on the basis of full holiday let use regardless of whether the educational activities are implemented or not.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of confirmation that no archaeological structures will be disturbed, no adverse comments from the County Archaeologist 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, materials, landscaping, trees to be retained, holiday let only, parking spaces, services underground, soakaways, removal of PD rights for extensions, gates, walls, fences, and outbuildings. Notes re Disabled Persons Act, energy and water conservation, health and safety and connection to Wessex Water infrastructure.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The site is adequately screened and the proposal is not considered to be harmful to the landscape and has good access to the highway network, the visual and residential amenity of the area would not be detrimentally affected and the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area would be maintained/enhanced and therefore is compliant with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S1, S2, S8, EC19 and EN15 (Revised Deposit numbering).

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

CONTACT OFFICER: 356586 MR R UPTON

NOTES: