

32/2005/002

MR & MRS P ETHERTON

CONVERSION OF OUTBUILDINGS TO CLASSROOMS AND CONSTRUCTION OF TOILET FACILITIES AT MARLANDS, SAMPFORD ARUNDEL, WELLINGTON

09838/18281

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the conversion of an existing two storey stable block to classroom accommodation and the extension of an existing garage to provide toilet accommodation. Accompanying the application is a statement that describes the school as an international study centre. The statement goes on to say that it is proposed to establish a proprietorial study centre for international students to improve their English language, who would then go on to study at other independent schools. The students would be placed in homestay accommodation with host families, preferably in the local rural environment. Mini-buses would collect students from their host families and drop them back in the evenings. Students would study most of their lessons at Marlands but would also attend Wellington School to use its science laboratories and sports centre.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY objections raised on the grounds of sustainability and substandard access lanes. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY no comment.

DRAINAGE OFFICER no objections. Recommend an advisory note re surface water discharge to soakaways and that Environment Agency approval is required for sewage treatment works

PARISH COUNCIL welcomes the proposed enterprise, which it is felt would benefit the local community, envisages no problems and supports the application unconditionally. It is recommended that planning permission be granted.

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review 1991 - 2011; Policy STR1, amongst other things, seeks to develop a pattern of land use which minimises the length of journeys and the need to travel; Policy STR6 applies strict control over development outside settlements and restricts it 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 EC3 requires that the conversion of rural buildings outside of development limits for commercial or other employment generating uses will be permitted provided that the character of the building is respected and is not prejudicial to highway safety.

ASSESSMENT

In terms of meeting the criteria of policy EC3 for the conversion of rural buildings the former stable block that is currently used as ancillary domestic/annexe accommodation would not require any significant external alteration. The building is considered to be of permanent and substantial construction, and requires no extension, is in keeping with its surroundings and is sited near a public road. The extension to the existing garage block is not considered a significant extension and would be in keeping with the character of the building and its surroundings. The proposal is also considered not to cause any detrimental impact to the visual or residential amenity of the area.

In the opinion of the Highway Authority however, the lane from Sampford Arundel to Marlands is substandard in terms of alignment/width. New traffic movements would therefore be encouraged along a substandard highway and the proposal is therefore prejudicial to highway safety. In the latter respect, the proposal is therefore not considered to full comply with the conversion policy or policy S1 that also requires development not to cause road safety problems.

Furthermore due to its isolated location, outside of any recognisable settlement and remoteness from services including public transport, the proposal is considered to be unsustainable. In order to access the site students would be dependant on car/mini-bus use that would appear not to be consistent with planning policy, the objectives of which aim to reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable development in the countryside. Whilst it is accepted that the use of a mini-bus would reduce the frequency of traffic movements it is considered that the proposed use would be best served from within a recognised settlement, especially as the project is to collaborate with Wellington school. In terms of the control of such a development it would be difficult to enforce the use of a mini-bus for the collection of students and staff. Furthermore the proposal, even with a mini-bus collection service, does nevertheless result in a significant need to travel. The proposal would therefore appear to be at odds with sustainable planning policy that aims to avoid fostering growth in the need to travel.

The Parish Council has commented that the proposal would contribute to the rural economy of the area however there is no guarantee, or method of ensuring that the host families are all located within the local rural area. It would therefore appear that there are insufficient grounds to justify the proposed location, outside the limits of any identified settlement.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of no further letters of representation raising new issues by 25th April 2005, the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be REFUSED for the reasons of (1) The site is located outside the confines of any major settlement in an area that has very limited public transport services. The development will increase the reliance on the private motor vehicles and would compromise sustainable development, which is contrary to advice contained within PPG 13 and RPG 10 and to the provisions of Policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review 1991 2011 and contrary to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S1(a) (Revised Deposit numbering); and (2) The access lane leading to and serving Marlands, by reason of its restricted width, poor alignment is considered unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development, contrary to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S1(a) (Revised Deposit numbering) and Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy 49.

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

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NOTES: