

46/2004/006

SEDGEMOOR LTD

USE OF PREMISES (EXISTING AND RECENT BARN CONVERSION) AS CHILDREN'S HOME WITH ATTENDANT EDUCATION, INDEPENDENCE TRAINING ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT, ASSOCIATED ADMINISTRATION OFFICE AND STAFF TRAINING ASSOCIATED WITH THESE USES, TALAVERA (FORMERLY MANLEYS FARM/HOUSE), WEST BUCKLAND.

16741/19369

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal provides for the use of both the existing buildings used by the applicants and the barn recently converted to two dwellings. The applicants wish to use all the buildings for children's home use with attendant education, independence training accommodation support and associated administration office and staff training associated with these uses. The existing buildings in use at the premises benefit from planning permission granted in 1997 for use for residential accommodation for children in care (aged up to 16 years) and attendant staff and for 'independence training' accommodation (16 years plus). The other building the subject of the current planning application was granted planning permission last year for the conversion to two dwellings. This latter development has now been carried out, although the building is not yet occupied. The application effectively seeks the use of all the buildings around the courtyard as a whole planning unit, in order to give a degree of future flexibility as to the individual uses of each building. The applicant's agent makes reference to the Care Leavers' Act 2002, in which the Government has made provision for the transitional care of children when they come out of care at the age of 16, in providing them with 'independence training' support to help them to make the transition from a children's home to seeking further education or employment and looking after themselves as a young adult. The applicant's agent considers that the proposal will greatly assist in meeting the specific demand at any one time when dealing with referrals from the Social Services department.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY similar comments to previous application for the barn conversion (46/2002/024) apply. CHA recommended refusal on previous application on highway grounds for the following reason:- "The site is located outside the confines of any major settlement in an area that is remote from adequate services, employment, education, public transport, etc. The development, if approved, will increase the reliance on the private motor car and foster a growth in the need to travel, contrary to advice given in PPG13, RPG10 and Policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review." Should the benefit of retaining the building outweigh the transport sustainability issues, would recommend that conditions be applied re visibility splays of 2.0 m x 45 m in each direction; properly consolidated access over first 6 m; and entrance gates to be hung to open in wards and set back a minimum distance of 4.5 m from the carriageway edge".

RIGHTS OF WAY OFFICER the route of the footpath will not be affected by the development. DRAINAGE OFFICER standard note to be included about sizing, possible pollution nuisance, etc, with regard to the existing septic tank.

PARISH COUNCIL has highlighted the poor access to this site with each of the many applications submitted in recent years. The single carriageway access roads are very narrow with blind corners, high banks and hedges and with minimal unadopted passing places. This application will add yet more traffic on a site where traffic generated by past applications has always been greater than predicted. Already cars from this intensely developed site are parking on the road.

TWO LETTERS OF OBJECTION at present the main house and classrooms which accommodate children and staff are detached from the adjacent dwellings - but if permission is granted for use of the barn conversion, this will converge with garden/patio area of adjacent dwelling; velux windows on rear of barn conversion backing on to dwelling and a bedroom within approximately 6 m of the barn conversion; applicants are an independent business which accommodates dysfunctional juveniles who are staffed by people who neither have the authority or power to discipline them, therefore concerns at increase in both number of residents and pupils to the site; have previously been disturbed by loud music from main house and are anxious about noise levels should they move closer and back onto adjacent dwelling; has been harassment by lewd suggestions from the residents/pupils, who also have looked into adjacent dwellings and trespassed on nearby property; children in care are likely to cause additional noise - aware that some have been very distressed, windows broken and items thrown; whilst the number of residents and pupils are limited at present an increase has the potential of creating further problems; concern at possibility of converted barn being used as accommodation or classrooms; the narrow country road here is already busy with traffic coming to the premises with some vehicles parking on the road blocking the road and causing a potential hazard; extra residents will need extra staff which means an increase in vehicles and extra pupils will mean extra vehicles to transport them to and from the premises - concern with regard to the extra traffic and the inherent parking issues; this is a peaceful rural community and quality of life will be greatly affected; inadequate parking.

POLICY CONTEXT

County Structure Plan policy STR1 on sustainable development is relevant. Part of this policy requires the development of a pattern of land use and transport which minimises the length of journeys and the need to travel and maximises the potential for the use of public transport, cycling and walking. The County Highway Authority consider that the proposal would clearly foster a growth in the need to travel and is therefore unsustainable in terms of transport policy. I consider that the economic benefits of the development in terms of diversification in the rural economy and the retention of the building outweigh the sustainability concerns of the Highway Authority. Policy 19 of the Somerset Structure Plan states that in rural areas provision should be made for development which creates or enhances local employment facilities.

Policies WD/SP/3 of the West Deane Local Plan is relevant. This policy indicates that change of use of buildings outside defined settlement limits will be allowed provided certain criteria are met. It is considered that these criteria are met with the current proposal.

Policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit includes general requirements for new developments. One of these requirements is that the accessibility of the development by public transport, cycling and pedestrian networks would be consistent with its likely trip generation and minimising the need to use the car. Policy EC3 of the same plan states that outside the defined limits of settlements, the conversion of buildings to small scale business, industrial, warehousing, tourism, recreation, community, commercial or other employment generating use will be permitted provided that certain criteria are met.

ASSESSMENT

I consider that securing the future of this redundant traditional agricultural building outweighs the sustainability argument of the County Highway Authority. The visibility splay requirements of the County Highway Authority would have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the rural lane at this point. In view of the existing use of the premises, I consider the proposal to provide for more flexible use of the premises is acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to time limit. Note re advice that visitors park in the designated parking area in the courtyard rather than on the highway.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposal is located at premises which are in existing use for the proposed uses, with the proposal consolidating the uses. It is considered that the proposal is in line with the provisions of Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policies S1 and EC3.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: 356461 MR J HAMER

NOTES:

