

ROSS CAMPBELL

CHANGE OF USE AND CONVERSION OF HEALTH CLUB TO SEVEN DWELLINGS, CONVERSION OF OUTBUILDINGS TO TWO DWELLINGS AND SUBDIVISION OF OWNERS HOUSE INTO TWO DWELLINGS AT PRESIDENTS HEALTH CLUB, STOKE HILL, HENLADE.

27520/23000

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The application seeks the conversion of the buildings currently comprising the health club into seven dwellings, an outbuilding into a further two together with subdivision of the proprietor's dwelling. In support of the application, the proprietor has written to indicate the reasons why the proposal has been submitted.

"Firstly while we fully appreciate the need to maintain and preserve recreational facilities for the local community, I would point out that it is because of competitive pressure from more and more health and fitness facilities, both public and private sector that operation of Presidents has become unviable. I would also point out that this is a reluctant move by my partners and I and not one that we ever wanted or envisaged. We have thrown all possible finances and marketing at the business in the last few years to dwindling effect. It has now become a priority for the future of my family to move to this stage. We simply can not compete any longer in a market place that has become more and more price sensitive and is being spread ever more thinly around the facilities. The provision of a new 23,000 square foot health club in East Reach will be the final nail in the coffin. Even members are aware that it must be creating hardship for us and many people are just waiting until it opens next year. It also makes the point that while one facility is closing, other larger ones on the same side of town are opening therefore ensuring that the sport and recreational needs of local community are met. People will be able to go somewhere else. Should this application not be accepted then we will be forced to foreclose anyway with mounting debt. Secondly, we have been looking for a buyer for the business for 3 years. However the type of niche club that we operate does not fit the requirements of most if not all operators. The multi national groups look for facilities in or just out of town and prefer new build and a greater square footage. An independent operator would suffer the same problems that we have and so it would not be cost effective. This is why we have reluctantly chosen this planning route."

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the proposed development is unlikely to generate more traffic than the existing use of the site, and consequently I would not wish to raise an objection to this proposal. WESSEX WATER no objection.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH recommends note due to possibility of noise from adjacent depot. DRAINAGE OFFICER suggests conditions. LEISURE & RECREATION

OFFICER please ensure that a contribution to sport/open space is made that we will spend within the parish in consultation with the Parish Council.

SPORT ENGLAND we have considered the application in the light of Sport England's Land Use Planning Policy Statement 'Planning Policies for Sport' (a copy of which was sent to your council in the autumn of 1999). The overall thrust of the statement is that a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities for sport is necessary in order to ensure the sport and recreational needs of the local community are met. Sport England has adopted a national policy on the loss of sports facilities. We feel that the protection of existing facilities is vital for the continued development of sport. However, as sport is a relatively low value land use, sports facilities are often under pressure from other forms of development. Sport England's Planning Policy Objective 5, contained in our 'Planning Policies for Sport' document states: "To prevent the loss of facilities or access to natural resources which are important in terms of sports development. Should redevelopment be unavoidable, an equivalent (or better) replacement facility should be provided in a suitable location." Consequently, Sport England objects to the above proposal. We would gladly reconsider our position if there were any further details that we should be aware of.

STOKE ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL have held a site meeting where they resolved not to raise objection provided that the proposal did not set a precedent for further development. RUISHTON & THORNFALCON PARISH COUNCIL it should be noted that although this development is in Stoke St Mary Parish, it does affect our parishioners more than those of our neighbouring parish. There is concern over the number of dwellings, the density and that the type of development which does not appear to be suitable for an area of designated open country and would have an impact on the environment. It is noted that no garages are included which may mean further development at a later date. Stoke Hill is very narrow and access would be a problem, as it is at present. It should also be noted that there is a storage facility for liquid gas in the area. Concern that the development could overlook neighbouring properties, especially the property known as 'Henlade Way'. We would not like to see the property used as a holiday complex.

4 LETTERS OF REPRESENTATION have been received raising the following concerns: housing out of place in rural location; will lead to pressure for further developments; loss of amenity; loss of jobs; density out of keeping; privacy of adjoining dwellings; entrance needs to be kept clear to allow access to Dairy house Farm.

POLICY CONTEXT

PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation states that: "Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements." Structure Plan Policy STR1 relates to sustainable development and TR6 to development outside settlement limits. Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy C4 requires that developers of new housing will provide landscaped and appropriately equipped recreational open space in accordance with approved standards; Policy S1 covers general requirements and H9 conversion of rural buildings.

ASSESSMENT

The buildings generally meet the criteria for conversion of buildings in the countryside. Whilst their subdivision into small units results in a high density form of development, it does not impact upon nearby dwellings and the traffic generated will be less than from the existing use.

In the light of the recent growth in Health and Fitness clubs in the Taunton area it is not thought that the proposal could be resisted on the grounds of loss of a recreational facility, nor would it be appropriate to seek a contribution towards alternative provision.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the applicants entering into a Section 106 Agreement to provide a contribution of £12,500 towards off-site provision of play equipment and agreement to maintain the two existing tennis courts for the use of the residents; and the submissions of revised roofing details the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be granted subject to conditions of time limit, landscaping, walls and fences, parking, meter boxes, windows, extensions, ancillary buildings. Notes re: drainage, noise from adjacent depot, conversion, CDM regulations.

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:

