

20/2005/008

C J HEAYNS

FORMATION OF VEHICLE ACCESS FROM KINGSTON ROAD AT MILLFIELD HOUSE, KINGSTON ST MARY

22295/29062

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the formation of an additional residential access from Kingston Road. The access would punctuate a roadside hedge onto an area of highway verge.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY no objections raised subject to conditions. The proposed vehicular access would enable a car emerging to have 60 m visibility in a northerly direction and 33 m in a southerly direction, this would be adequate visibility within a 30 mph limit to serve a single dwelling.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER I have no objections to the proposed driveway. (1) the existing hedgerow is classed as 'important' under the hedgerow regulations because of its proximity to the road. It has six species within the hedgerow which is just one short of being 'species' important. (2) the construction of the ramped driveway will require considerable excavations which will affect the amenity of this important access into Kingston St Mary.

PARISH COUNCIL the Parish Council has given careful consideration to this application but wishes to object on the following grounds:- There is already adequate access to Millfield House from Parsonage Lane. It is understood from Parish Council records that the hedge fronting Kingston Road is likely to be of Mediaeval origin. Doctor C G Hancock of the Somerset Wildlife Trust has previously advised that the diversity of species in the hedgerow indicates this to be the case. Policy EN6 of the Local Plan states that development that would harm historic hedgerows of value to the area's landscape character will not be permitted. No compensation of the loss of such a hedge is likely to be acceptable in this case. Mill Cross experiences complex vehicle turning movements with limited visibility, at a narrow section of the highway where traffic often needs to give way to on-coming vehicles from the opposite direction. An additional access at the location proposed would accentuate these difficulties and further prejudice highway safety in the village.

TWO LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- there is already adequate access to Millfield House, this would be a third access within a 40m distance on to what is already a dangerous and increasingly busy road; a previous application was refused due to the highway safety reasons and because of the Saxon hedge, such an access would seriously inconvenience residents of Milcot, Mill Cross Cottages, Davestones, and Mill Cross; concerned that this application is a precursor to more holiday cottages.

ONE LETTER OF SUPPORT has been received:- the new drive will make very little change to the existing frontage and will have a more convenient access to the house.

POLICY CONTEXT

Policy 49 (access) of the Somerset and Exmoor Joint Structure Plan Review is relevant to this application.

Policies S1 (general requirements), S2 (design) and EN6 (protected trees and hedgerows) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan are relevant to this application.

ASSESSMENT

In the opinion of the Highway Authority there is adequate visibility so that the proposal would not be prejudicial to highway safety. There is enough highway verge so that a car emerging from the access would gain enough visibility in each direction. This verge area adjacent to the highway would mean that visibility splays, which would result in the cutting back or removal of the roadside hedge, would not be required. It has been pointed out that cars park on this verge area. The County Highway Authority have indicated that this area is an unofficial place where vehicles stop on the highway rather than laid out parking spaces or a formal lay-by. As such the Highway Authority raise no objections.

Only a small section of hedge, the width of the access, would need to be removed and therefore the proposal would not cause a detrimental loss to the visual amenity of the area. The fact that the applicants have an existing access from Parsonage Lane should not be an overriding consideration in this area.

Regarding the landscape officer's comments, whilst the hedge may be important, a section of hedge, the size of that proposed to be removed to form the access, could be removed without the need for consent given its domestic ownership. Furthermore as visibility splays are not required only a small section of hedge needs to be removed. The lack of visibility splays means that views of the ramped driveway (which is limited by Highways to 1 in 10) will be limited.

In previous applications the hedge bounding the highway has been found to be of ancient origin. Although applications in the garden area of Millfield House for housing have been refused in the past (applications 20/1988/026 and 20/1990/022) the punctuation of the hedge did not form part of the reasons for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, consolidated surface, entrance gates, gradient, disposal of surface water to highway, visibility and any other conditions recommended by the Landscape Officer. Notes regarding connection to the highway.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposal is considered not to have a detrimental impact upon visual, residential amenity and highway safety and is therefore considered acceptable and, accordingly, does not conflict with Policy 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor Joint Structure Plan Review and 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.

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NOTES: