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CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS
& DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

09 SEP 2008

Head of Culture and Development
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
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Hinckley
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DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES
09 SEP 2008
RECEIVED

5 September 2008

Dear Sir,

RE: PROPOSED GYPSY CARAVAN SITE
LAND AT STOKE LANE, HIGHAM ON THE HILL

Please find enclosed completed planning application forms and plans in respect of the above-mentioned proposal. This is a re-submission of planning application number 08/00117/COU, and therefore no fee is payable.

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Use & Amount

The proposal is for a change of use of land from use for the keeping of horses, to a mixed use for the keeping of horses and as a residential caravan site for one Gypsy family with two caravans. One of these caravans will be a static mobile home, and no additional facilities will therefore be required.

Layout

The application site comprises a narrow strip of land along the western side of Stoke Lane. The site already contains a recently re-furbished stable building, together with a large area of hard-standing to the rear of the stable building. Planning permission exists for the formation of a riding arena at the southern end of the site (06/00326/FUL). It is intended that the proposed caravans will be stationed on the existing hard-standing, behind the stable building, as shown on the submitted block plan.

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Access

The previous application was refused purely on highway safety grounds due to the intensification of use of the existing, sub-standard, access. Subsequently, negotiations have taken place with County Highways to agree a suitable new access point. I attach a letter from County Highways confirming that, providing the existing access is permanently closed, the proposed replacement access will be acceptable from a highway safety point of view.

In terms of sustainability, the site is close to the edge of Higham on the Hill which contains local shops, a primary school, and links by public transport to Hinckley and Nuneaton for a wider range of community services and facilities.

Landscaping

The site is already well screened from Stoke Lane by the stable building, and by roadside hedgerows under the ownership and control of the applicant. Provision of the new access will require partial removal and relocation of the roadside hedge to the south of the stable building in order to provide the required visibility splays. It may be possible to relocate the existing hedge by digging a trench behind the hedge, and dragging the hedge back, behind the visibility splay. Alternatively, a new hedge could be planted in front of a 2 metre high, close-boarded fence.

I attach a recent appeal decision in which the Inspector accepted that Gypsy sites do not need to be hidden and, in fact, should not be segregated from the wider community. Circular 01/2006 acknowledges that landscaping, including planting with trees and shrubs, can assimilate gypsy sites into their surroundings. This advice clearly infers that sites do not need to be assimilated from the outset, and that time must be allowed for landscaping to mature.

Policy Context

Local Plan Policy RES13 allows for the approval of proposals for Gypsy sites in the countryside, subject to satisfying 6 criteria. Clearly, in this case, the site is located within a reasonable distance of local services and facilities (criterion a); there would be no likely adverse effect on

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neighbours (criterion b); the site would have an acceptable access, together with adequate areas for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles within the site (criterion d); the proposals include substantial peripheral landscaping (criterion e); and there is no conflict with other policies of the Local Plan (criterion f). Provided that there would be no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside (criterion c), Policy RES13 will be fully satisfied and planning permission should be granted.

At the appeal on the A5, near Higham-on-the-Hill, the Council's planning witness accepted that, in the light of Circular 01/2006, criterion c imposed too onerous a test. In this case the application site is clearly capable of accommodating sufficient additional landscaping to assimilate the proposed caravan site into its rural surroundings. Criterion c can therefore be complied with to the extent necessary under Circular 01/2006.

Personal Circumstances

The proposed site will accommodate John and Donna Price, together with their children, Morgan (6 years old) and Chelsea (2). They have been living on a gypsy site at Sapcote, but this was only available for a temporary period whilst the usual resident was away travelling. This family require a secure site as a settled base for their travelling, from which Morgan can continue her schooling and where John Price can look after his horses.

Conclusions

The proposed caravan site was previously refused planning permission purely on highway safety grounds, because of the standard of the existing access. This reason for refusal has now been overcome and, although the site will initially appear more open due to the provision of visibility splays, additional landscaping is proposed which, in time, will re-establish a level of screening previously found to be acceptable. Policy RES13 can therefore be fully satisfied, and planning permission should be granted.

There is a substantial unmet need for gypsy sites in Hinckley and Bosworth which has been assessed as being for 26 additional residential

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pitches in the period 2006-2011. This proposal would reduce that need by one pitch, and would relieve the Council of part of its responsibility, under the new circular, for identifying and allocating sufficient sites on which to satisfy identified needs.

I trust that you will support my client's application, and make a favourable recommendation to the Council. However, if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP BROWN BA (HONS) MRTPI

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