

Area West Committee - 21st March 2012

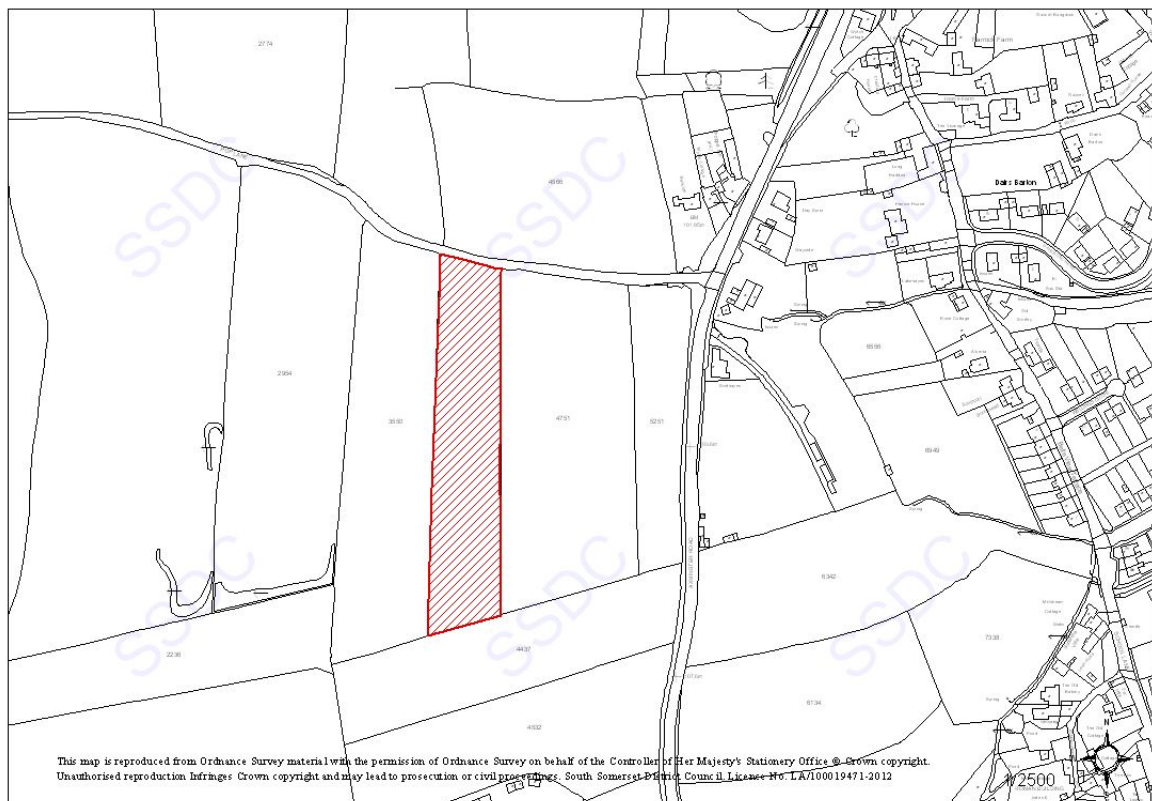
Officer Report on Planning Application: 11/04589/FUL

Proposal:	The change of use of land for the keeping of horses and the erection of stables, store and associated yard works. (GR 332385/105607)
Site Address:	Land Os 4050 Pop Lane Tatworth
Parish:	Tatworth And Forton
TATWORTH AND FORTON Ward (SSDC Member)	Mr A Turpin (Cllr)
Recommending Case Officer:	Diana Watts Tel: (01935) 462483 Email:diana.watts@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date:	28th February 2012
Applicant:	Mr M Perham
Agent:	Andy Woodward Equestrian Design 5 Wasley Close Fearnhead Warrington Cheshire WA2 0DH
Application Type:	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

REASON FOR COMMITTEE

At the request of the local Ward Member and as agreed by the Area Chair, to discuss the landscape impact.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL



The site is situated to the west of Tatworth village. The application site comprises a 2.5 acre field approximately 150m from the nearest house.

This application proposes to erect a 10.8m long x 3.6m deep double stable block with a tack and feed store beside the northern boundary of the field. The building would be 2.9m high to the ridge, with the walls clad in timber and corrugated onduline sheeting used on the roof. A concrete yard area would be provided below the roof canopy and adjacent to the building to form a parking/turning area. The application includes the change of the field for the keeping of horses, a non-agricultural use.

A Design and Access Statement has been submitted to support and explain the proposal:

- The applicant owns two horses which are currently kept on the outskirts of Forton, 2.4 miles away from the field and about 2 miles from his house in Watermead
- The stables would be used solely for the private use of the applicant and his wife, for the keeping of horses and for the storage of feed, tack and equipment
- They enjoy hacking out and pleasure riding
- The field is surrounded by hedgerows with the northern boundary hedge being between 3m and 4m high and the western hedge of a similar height giving the development excellent visual protection from the north and west and an extremely good backdrop when viewed from the south and east, therefore not affecting the openness of the surrounding area
- The stables would not be highly visible or easily seen from any public vantage point in the local area
- Pop Lane is not heavily used, giving access between Axminster Road and Brockhole Lane, and also a bridleway at Parrocks Lane
- An automated traffic count was carried out and on the busiest day there were only 23 movements and almost all were under 20mph
- The applicant intends to mainly (about 80% of total trips) walk or cycle from his home at Watermead to the field, about 1000m away, taking about 10 minutes
- Vet, farrier, dentist etc visits would be perhaps one visit every 7/8 weeks
- Feed deliveries about 1 visit every 8/10 weeks
- Manure trailer transport every 8/10 weeks
- Access has been improved by moving the gate back off the highway
- Stables would be stained brown
- The concrete area would not only allow access to the stables and store but would also provide an area for the applicant to park his manure trailer
- Security cameras and alarms would be fitted
- With regard to policy CR6, the site is not sensitive and is very close to Tatworth development

RELEVANT HISTORY

932541 - Erection of field shelter and timber shed - approved 2004 (a very modest building, used in connection with grazing animals and given a temporary permission until 1999)

2011 - Pre-application advice given that the current proposal would be likely to be refused on landscape and highway safety grounds.

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 repeats the duty imposed under S54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires that decision must be made in accordance with relevant Development Plan Documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Saved policies of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review 1991-2011:

Policy STR1 - Sustainable Development
Policy STR6 - Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages
Policy 5 - Landscape Character

Saved policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted April 2006):

Policy ST3 - Development Areas
Policy ST5 - General Principles of Development
Policy ST6 - The Quality of Development
Policy EC3 - Landscape Character
Policy EP3 - Light Pollution
Policy CR6 - Horses and Development

National Guidance

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy

Goal 3 - Healthy and Active
Goal 8 - Quality Development
Goal 11 -Environment

CONSULTATIONS

Tatworth and Forton Parish Council:

Supports the application.

SSDC Technical Services:

No comment.

County Highway Authority:

The site is located outside defined development limits and is considered to be in an unsustainable location in terms of transport policy. This would normally result in a recommendation of refusal, however it is noted that the site's end use i.e. stables is more suited to a location which is outside development limits. Therefore it might be considered to be unreasonable to raise objection on these grounds.

In terms of the detail, the application site is located on Pop Lane which is designated as an Unclassified Road. This is single width and sinuous in nature with high hedges on either side of the carriageway. In addition there are limited passing places between the junction and the application site. Therefore this is not a location where the Highway Authority would wish to see any development that would result in a significant increase in vehicle movements.

From the submitted documentation the applicant has indicated that the stables would be for private use only. As a consequence the likely increase in traffic would be minimal, therefore it would be considered unreasonable of the Highway Authority to raise objections on these grounds. Although it would be prudent that if planning permission were to be granted that a personal condition is attached, which limits the site to the applicants own personal use.

Therefore to conclude although the proposal is located in a remote location and the approach roads are considered to be substandard, it is accepted that the site would be utilised for the applicants own private use. Therefore it would be considered to be unreasonable for the Highway Authority to raise objection to this proposal.

Landscape Architect:

1) In this location to the west of the village of Tatworth, the landscape of the lower Blackdowns is emphatically rural, and characterised by its gradually rising hillsides and relatively open profile of pasture and arable fields. Other than occasional dispersed farmsteads, there is sparse development presence once to the west of the A358, and a sense of remoteness as one ascends the hillside - which is a further defining characteristic of the area. Hence development form in this general location would be at variance with the distinctive landscape character of the Blackdown's lower hillsides, and thus at odds with local plan policies ST5 para 4 and EC3.

2) Policy CR6 requires stables to be closely related to existing buildings or settlements if they are to be acceptable - in this instance there is no close relationship, and policy CR6 is not met.

3) There may be a need for lighting during winter months. Policy EP3 para 3 (light pollution) advises against the use of lighting where it will adversely affect the character of the locality. Lighting within the context of the Blackdown's hillsides would certainly be contrary to local character, and its possibility should be avoided.

4) Policy ST3 seeks environmental benefit from a scheme: I would contend that use of land for horses does not bring an inherent environmental benefit, for equestrian activity can result in substantial change to the character and condition of the countryside: Impacts include the subdivision of fields, which can change the scale and grain of the landscape; visual clutter created by polytape, fencing, jumps, security gates, field shelters and vehicle storage; damage to grassland habitat caused by poaching, compaction and overgrazing; as well as the landscape and visual impacts of arenas, maneges and stables. I note the intention to establish buildings and a yard on site, and by conferring an equestrian use, other (aforementioned) impacts can follow.

5) Clearly there will be a SCC Highways requirement to establish a new access, and achieve acceptable visibility lines in relation to the access. If the Highway's standard solution is deemed necessary, then this will lead to an adverse impact upon the character of the local lane network, by the provision of a hard surfaced frontage, which is usually circa 13 metres across the face of the access - over 3 x the width of the lane - and a removal/reduction in the hedgeline. This is also viewed as an adverse impact upon the landscape of the locality, contrary to local plan policies ST5 para 4 and EC3.

Given all these factors, there are clear landscape grounds for a refusal of this application.

REPRESENTATIONS

A site notice was posted (General Interest) and 2 letters of support have been received which include the following comments:

- I ride my horse daily around the fast and busy roads between Forton, Tatworth and Chard
- A desperate lack of 'off road' hacking forces riders onto the busy A and B roads
- Transport authorities, police and air ambulance would be delighted to see horses re-located across the A358 into Pop Lane where they can ride around the quiet lanes
- This parcel of land is of no consequence to the farming industry
- This is a well thought out application with the stables screened extremely well by the existing hedge
- Limited lighting for half an hour early morning and evening in a building hidden behind a hedge will not be contrary to local character
- The applicant will fence the field with wooden post and rails and not white 'electric' tape
- With regard to damage to grassland habitat. This can happen on any land with any animal
- Seems hypocritical that farms can erect huge metal buildings that stand out like a sore thumb whilst the applicant merely wishes to erect a tastefully built timber building which would be hardly noticeable.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Landscape Impact

The stable building would be situated in a field in the open countryside, away from the village of Tatworth. The area is characterised by small-medium sized fields and a lack of development. As highlighted by the Council's Landscape Architect, the landscape of the lower Blackdowns is emphatically rural, and characterised by its gradually rising hillsides and a relatively open profile of pasture and arable fields. Other than occasional dispersed farmsteads, there is sparse development presence once to the west of the A358, and a sense of remoteness as one ascends the hillsides, which is a further defining characteristic of the area. Hence development form in this general location would be at variance with the distinctive landscape character of the Blackdown's lower hillsides, and thus at odds with local plan policies ST5 para 4 and EC3.

Policy CR6 requires stables to be closely related to existing buildings or settlements if they are to be acceptable. The application site is distinctly separate from the nearby settlement of Tatworth, there are no existing buildings in the field and the nearest buildings are more than 150m from the application site.

Whilst the building would be sited behind and partly screened by an established hedgerow, the impact on the wider landscape must be considered, and the new building would be seen particularly from the east/ south-east, including from Axminster Road and its junction with Pop Lane, and it would still be apparent from Pop Lane, especially in winter. It is considered that the proposed stable building would be unrelated to any built form, would appear out of context and uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape, contrary to Local Plan policies ST5, CR6 and EC3.

There are also a number of small-medium sized fields in the immediate area, where there could be significant pressure for similar equestrian based developments and

allowing stables here could be used as a precedent to justify others nearby, leading to cumulative harm to the countryside.

Furthermore, as pointed out by the Council's Landscape Architect, there may be a need for lighting during winter months. Policy EP3 para 3 (light pollution) advises against the use of lighting where it will adversely affect the character of the locality. Lighting within the context of the Blackdown's hillsides would certainly be contrary to local character, and its possibility should be avoided.

Policy ST3 seeks environmental benefit from a scheme and it is felt that use of land for the keeping of horses does not bring an inherent environmental benefit, as equestrian activity can result in substantial change to the character and condition of the countryside. Impacts include the subdivision of fields, which can change the scale and grain of the landscape; visual clutter created by polytape, fencing, jumps, security gates, and vehicle storage, together with damage to grassland habitat caused by compaction and overgrazing. There is no planning control over such matters and they would exacerbate the detrimental impact of such equestrian development on the landscape.

Similar issues have been assessed at appeal elsewhere in South Somerset and Inspectors have agreed that such sporadic development would be harmful, could set a precedent causing further cumulative harm to the countryside and acknowledged that the spread of unfixed structures and equipment associated with an equestrian use would not be possible to control by condition.

2. Highway Safety

Pop Lane is an unclassified road, which is single width and sinuous in nature with high hedges on either side of the carriageway. In addition there are limited passing places between the junction and the application site. Therefore this is not a location where the Highway Authority would wish to see any development that would result in a significant increase in vehicle movements. The Highway Authority however has taken the view that if the stables would be for private use only, the likely increase in traffic would be minimal, and it would be considered unreasonable to raise objections on these grounds.

The existing access into the field has already been improved and the Highway Authority does not feel it necessary to insist on further improvements through the provision of visibility splays.

3. Residential Amenity

This is an isolated site and it is considered that the proposal would not give rise to any adverse impact on the residential amenity of the nearest residential properties, some 150m away.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse permission

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:

1. The proposal, due to its siting remote from any settlement or built form, would be at variance with and detract from the distinctive landscape character of the Blackdown's lower hillsides, and would set an undesirable precedent making it difficult to resist similar development in the surrounding area, causing further cumulative harm to the countryside, contrary to policies ST3 (Development Areas),

ST5 (General Principles of Development), ST6 (Quality of Development), CR6 (Horses and Development), EP3 (Light Pollution) and EC3 (Landscape character) of the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted April 2006), policies STR1 (Sustainable Development), STR6 (Development outside towns, rural centres and villages), and 5 (Landscape Character) of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan (Adopted April 2000).
