

Draft minute from Area South Committee 7<sup>th</sup> July 2010

**10/01760/R3D – The erection of a single storey Ranger Centre to include office/kitchen/workshop/storage/education/meeting room/tea room and public toilet, Land Adjoining Car Park Brunswick Street Yeovil – Applicant: South Somerset District Council**

The Assistant Director (Economy) advised that as the Council were the applicants, the application would be finally determined by the Regulation Committee and it was for the Area South Committee to now consider and submit their recommendation and any other comments, to the Regulation Committee.

He then presented the application to the Committee with the assistance of a power point presentation, pointing out the location, height and length of the proposed building. He asked Members to focus on the key issues; whether it's location just outside the development limit was justified, the appropriateness of the location and whether they were satisfied with the design and scale of the building. He referred to the many letters of objection and support which had been received and the possible impact of the building upon the visual amenity of neighbouring properties. He noted that one mature tree would be removed and 3 silver birch trees could be moved to accommodate the proposal and he asked Members to consider the planning points raised in the officer's report.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the Assistant Director (Economy) advised that the Environmental Protection unit had been consulted but they had not raised any comments or objections in relation to the proposed development.

The Architectural Assistant informed members that the air source heat pumps would provide ventilation to the building during the summer months which solar panels or a ground source heat pump could not.

The Chairman then advised that several questions had been raised by Members of the Committee at a site visit earlier that day. The questions being:

1. Do we have plans to replace the felled trees? (yes)
2. What is the height of the external walls? (2.5 - 3M to eaves level)
3. Where is the existing Rangers hut? (the position was indicated at the site visit)
4. Will there be a planting scheme to mitigate the view from Brunswick Street (yes)
5. Will the container store continue to be used after the Ranger Centre is built (yes)

**Members of the public present were then invited to address the meeting.**

Mr R MacKay spoke in support of the application. He said the proposed building would enhance the facilities for the rangers, would provide storage and classroom style accommodation for educational visits. He regretted the original description as a workshop for vehicle storage which he felt had misled some people into thinking it would be an industrial unit.

Mr T Gillard spoke in support of the application. He said the volunteer rangers worked in the park in all weather and the proposed building would provide better facilities to meet and change for work.

Mr A Lyons said the Committee should support the application.

Mr B Smith spoke in support of the application. He said the building would help to promote the caring of the country park and it would provide a focus for educational work and a base for the volunteers.

Mr E Birchall spoke in opposition to the application. He said that although he supported the needs of the park rangers, there had been no public consultation on what was a light industrial building. The needs of the rangers could be met by erecting a building in a more suitable position elsewhere in the park or by using the nearby ski centre.

Mrs F Stuart spoke in support of the application. She said she was an environmental education professional who had produced an education pack for the Yeovil country park. She said the park held a wealth of education opportunities for students but lacked facilities or a focal point. She felt the building would be sustainable and she supported it.

Mr P Bradly spoke in opposition to the application. He said that as a past pupil of Reckleford School, he had visited the site many times and felt it was a natural wonder. The building proposed would erode the natural honesty of the park which he said should be protected and maintained as it currently was.

Mrs J Hoyle spoke in opposition to the application. She asked the committee to strongly consider the location. She said the building was justified but a better location would be more suitable, which she suggested could be near to the existing childrens play area.

The Countryside Manager advised that a number of locations for the rangers centre had been investigated following a consultation on what the public felt would enhance the park. An options appraisal was carried out and the ski centre, Foundry House, a site near the childrens play area and near to Goldenstones had all been considered and rejected for various size and accessibility reasons. A site opposite Goldenstones had been favoured, built into the bank, but due to a major powerline positioned there, this was not possible.

Councillor John V Chainey, one of the Ward Members, gave a brief history of the past uses and proposed schemes for the park and voiced his support for the rangers centre. He said the site was suitable, next to the existing car park and the materials used would soon weather and blend in.

Councillor Andrew Kendall, another Ward Member, said the application was very complex. He questioned the accessibility of the toilets proposed at the centre and was assured that all three would be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Councillor Peter Gubbins, a Ward Member, said he would reserve his personal comments for the Regulation Committee debate, however, in planning policy terms, the right to a view was not a material consideration and it was incorrect to think that a Council would allow an industrial building in a country park.

Members then discussed the application and several points were made including:-

- The health and safety needs of the rangers and volunteer rangers was important
- The building must relate to the park
- Vandalism was a concern and CCTV should be considered to discourage this
- There would be great educational benefits for students
- Concern at loss of a maple tree
- Disappointed that local people have been upset by the proposal
- Was it possible to lay mains gas to the site?

Several Members expressed concern at the air source heat pumps proposed for the building and asked that the SSDC Climate Change officer be asked to comment on their efficiency and noise output, prior to consideration by the Regulation Committee.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture (who had not taken part in the debate on the application by other members) said she was encouraged by the positive comments of the Committee. She said the staff and volunteers deserved better facilities and their current amenity of one cold water tap was insufficient. She concluded that the Council would not allow anything to be built which was not in keeping with the park.

It was proposed and seconded that the Area South Committee recommend approval of the application, subject to conditions and ask that the SSDC Climate Change Officer and Environmental Protection Unit be asked to investigate and comment upon the air source heat pumps proposed for the building, prior to determination by Regulation Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Committee and members of the public present for their contributions to the debate.

**RESOLVED:** that the Area South Committee recommend approval of the application, subject to the following conditions and ask that the SSDC Climate Change Officer be asked to investigate and comment upon the air source heat pumps proposed for the building, prior to determination by Regulation Committee.

01. Notwithstanding the comments made by local residents and the Town Council the proposal is of a scale, nature, design and form which respects the character and appearance of the area, creates a new public frontage for the Country Park, makes the most efficient use of land and develops the site in a way that safeguards residential amenity. As such the proposal is therefore in accordance with the advice and guidance contained within Planning Policy Statements 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, PPG21 - Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism, policies STR1, STR2, 1, 42, 44,48 and 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan (Adopted 2000) and policies ST3, ST5, ST6, ST7, EC3 and TP1 of the saved policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted April 2006).

**SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:**

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans, drawing numbers:

YCP/1135/01.2010/02, YCP/1135/01.2010/04, YCP/1135/01.2010/05, YCP/1135/01.2010/06, YCP/1135/01.2010/07, YCP/1135/01.2010/08 and YCP/1135/01.2010/09.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the development is carried out as approved.

03. The scheme of landscaping, hereby approved, shall be carried out in full during the first available planting season, following the commencement of development. For a period of five years after the completion of the planting scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition to the satisfaction of The Local Planning Authority and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with saved policy ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

*(Voting: 14 in favour, 0 against, 3 abstentions)*

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