

APPLICATION: MA/12/0378 Date: 28 February 2012 Received: 2 April 2012

APPLICANT: Sines LLP

LOCATION: PILGRIMS RETREAT, HOGBARN LANE, HARRIETSHAM, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME17 1NZ

PARISH: Harrietsham

PROPOSAL: Erection of shop and offices building in accordance with plans received on 2 April 2012.

AGENDA DATE: 31st January 2013

CASE OFFICER: Chris Hawkins

The recommendation for this application is being reported to Committee for decision because:

- It is contrary to views expressed by the Parish Council.

1. POLICIES

- Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000: ENV6, ENV28, ENV33, T13
- South East Plan 2009: TSR2, C4.
- Government Policy: National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

2. HISTORY

2.1 Whilst the application site has a significant planning history, there is none directly related to this proposal.

3. CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Harrietsham Parish Council were consulted and wish to see the above application **refused** for the reasons set out below:

- The application is contained within the North Downs AONB
- It is an inappropriately large scale office development
- The positioning of the proposed 2 storey building would over look the 18 permanent residential properties.

- 3.1.1 The Parish Council would prefer that any shop unit was annexed onto the existing club house structure.
- 3.1.2 The Parish Council would request that, if the Planning Officer's view differs, the application is reported to Planning Committee.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 No objections have been raised by any other interested party.

5. CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Site Description

- 5.1.1 The application site is located within the open countryside with the North Downs area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). The site is currently undergoing a significant level of works, and it is noted that a recent permission has been granted to allow an extension on the existing clubhouse.
- 5.1.2 The site is screened from both short and long distance views by a significant level of tree planting. Whilst some of the trees within the vicinity have been removed, this does not make the site any more visible from Hogbarn Lane.
- 5.1.3 There are currently a significant number of mobile homes within the site, as well as a two storey, brick built structure that accommodates the clubhouse and swimming pool, which is located in close proximity to this application site.

5.2 Proposal

- 5.2.1 The application is for the erection of a two storey office building which would have a ground floor footprint of 15metres by 8.5metres, and a first floor of 12.2metres by 6.4metres. The maximum height of the proposed building would be 7.5metres. It is proposed that the building would be constructed of brick and plain tiles.
- 5.2.2 The proposal would house the offices for the holiday park, as well as a small shop that would serve the customers/residents of the park.
- 5.2.3 A small number (7) of parking spaces are proposed to be located to the front of the store.

5.3 Principle of Development

- 5.3.1 Whilst the application site falls within the AONB, this in itself does not preclude development, rather restricts development to a form that would not harm the beauty of this area. The policy does allow for development that would meet the social and economic need of the rural areas. Seeing as this would provide an element of convenience shopping for residents of the park, I consider that there would be benefits to providing a facility of this sort, subject to an appropriate design, and a location that would not cause harm.
- 5.3.2 As the site lies within the open countryside, Policy ENV28 also applies to this proposal. This policy again identifies that development within the countryside should not cause harm. There are a number of criteria that are set out within this policy, which demonstrate when development will be allowed. One of these criteria relates to open air recreation, or ancillary buildings providing operational uses only. To my mind, this building would be ancillary to the running of a holiday park, for which a rural location has clearly been justified in the past.
- 5.3.3 I therefore raise no objection to the principle of development subject to the proposal causing no visual harm.

5.4 Visual Impact

- 5.4.1 Due to the siting of the holiday park, and the significant level of tree planting around the site, there are very limited views into the development. Whilst the proposal would be close to the access point, it would be adjacent to an existing two storey building, and within a cluster of mobile homes. Tree planting is proposed to the front of the building, at it would be of such a minor scale, that it would not appear as dominant within the landscape. To my mind, there would be very little visual harm to the landscape should this proposal be permitted and constructed.
- 5.4.2 In terms of its detailed design, the proposed building would be of a similar form to the existing building on site. Whilst relatively unremarkable, it would not appear as out of keeping within its context. I would however, recommend a condition be imposed that would require the submission of material samples to ensure that the proposal has a high quality finish.
- 5.4.3 Subject to suitable materials being submitted, I raise no objection to the proposal in terms of its visual impact, and as such, consider that it accords with both ENV28 and ENV33.

5.5 Residential Amenity

- 5.5.1 There are a number of mobile homes within close proximity of the proposed building. Some of these are used for long term occupation, and others shorter term. Nonetheless, the proposed use would not see the provision of any habitable rooms – being purely an office use, and retail. As such, I do not consider that the proposal would give rise to any unacceptable impact in terms of loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers.
- 5.5.2 I raise no concerns with regards to the proposal in terms of noise and disturbance to the existing residents. The shop would be of a minor scale, and would be in close proximity to the existing clubhouse. I consider its use unlikely to generate any harm to existing residents.

5.6 Highways

- 5.6.1 The offices and shop would be to serve residents only, and in my opinion a facility such as this would be likely to result in less vehicular movements into and out of the site. I therefore raise no objection on highways grounds.

5.7 Landscaping

- 5.7.1 The applicant is proposing that five additional trees be planted around the building to soften its impact. I consider this acceptable, and would seek that a landscaping condition be attached to ensure that a suitable species be provided should permission be granted.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 I consider that the erection of a building of this scale would not be unacceptable in terms of its visual impact, either in terms of its design, or the impact upon the character and appearance of the locality. Whilst the site lies within the AONB, it would be well screened, and would not impact upon biodiversity, being located on what is at present a well maintained lawn.
- 6.2 The proposed use would conform with existing policy, and would help to promote the tourist economy. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of the safeguarding conditions, as set out below.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to the imposition of the following conditions:

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

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development shall not commence until, written details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be constructed using the approved materials;

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

3. The proposed retail unit shall only be used for purposes ancillary to the holiday park, and shall at no time be operated as a separate unit.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability in accordance with ENV28 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

4. The development shall not commence until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping, using indigenous species which shall be in accordance with BS 5837 (2012) 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations' with indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development and a programme for the approved scheme's implementation and long term management. The scheme shall be designed using the principles established in the Council's adopted Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines and shall include the following;

- i) Details of the species, size, density and location of all new planting within the site;
- ii) Except for 1 *Malus hupehensis*, the retention of all existing trees along the application site's eastern boundary;
- iii) The southern and eastern boundary hedges of the site to consist of 10% Field Maple, 70% Hawthorn, 15% Hazel and 5% Holly mix; to be planted at 45cm centres in a double staggered row with 30cm between the rows;

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and biodiversity. This is in accordance with policy ENV6 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000, policy NRM5 of the South East Plan 2009 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s) or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation;

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory setting and external appearance to the development. This is in accordance with policy ENV6 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. The development shall not commence until details of a scheme of foul and surface water drainage for the site have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the subsequently approved details;

Reason: To ensure adequate drainage arrangements. This is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. The development shall not commence until details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and maintained thereafter;

i) details of the provision of swift and/or bat/bird boxes within the development;

Reason: In the interests of ecology and biodiversity. This is in accordance with policy NRM5 of the South East Plan 2009 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed development, subject to the conditions stated, is considered to comply with the policies of the Development Plan (Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and South East Plan 2009) and there are no overriding material considerations to indicate a refusal of planning consent.