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Our ref: PR002251

Date: 10th October 2023

Sent via e-mail

Dear Madam/Sir,

Stables to south of 92a/b High Street, Chapmanslade, Wiltshire BA13 4AN

Provision of new access track

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

I write on behalf of my clients Heather and John Foster, to apply for the provision of a new access track at the above site. The application is accompanied by the following drawings and reports:

- Site location plan (produced via Planning Portal);
- Drawing no. 2338.FOS.01 – existing site plan;
- Drawing no. 2338.FOS.02 – proposed site plan;
- Preliminary ecological assessment.

The site comprises a pair of single-storey equestrian stables to the rear of 92a and 92b High Street (the applicants reside at 96 High Street, and the site is accessible on foot from their rear garden), together with three fields to the south of the stables, in the village of Chapmanslade. The stables were erected circa 1979, under planning permission W/78/01308/HIS.

The southernmost field (field 3) has an existing vehicular access on to Huntenhull Lane, and is separated from the adjoining field (field 2) by fencing. This field in turn is separated from the northernmost field (field 1, which adjoins the stable blocks), by a native species-poor hedgerow.

The stables themselves fall within the Chapmanslade village boundary, with the field lying without. The site, as a whole, lies within the Chapmanslade Greensand ridge Special Landscape Area.

Proposal

It is proposed to provide a 3-metre wide all-weather access track to serve the stable block, utilising the existing vehicular access on to Huntenhull Lane. The 250-metre long track would have a central grass verge, and run along the northern boundary of field 1 from the stable block, before bearing southeast to run along the southwestern boundaries of fields 2 and 3, towards the Huntenhall Lane access. The existing gate will be removed, and a repositioned gate installed, in line with the proposed access track and the existing bellmouth on to Huntenhull Lane

The stables have been the subject of two (withdrawn) planning applications to provide a new dwellinghouse (refs: PL22/2022/03190 and PL/2022/09808). During the course of the second application, a local resident contacted the Council to challenge the applicants right of access to the stables from the track connected to Chapmanslade High Street. The current proposal seeks to address this issue, and ensure that the stable block continues to benefit from the necessary vehicular access.

Analysis

The key issues in assessing this proposal are considered to be (i) landscape impact, (ii) ecology and (iii) highways and access. These are addressed in turn below.

Landscape impact

Core Policy (CP) 57 requires new development to achieve a high standard of design and make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through, inter alia, relating positively to its landscape setting and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into the site are to be retained and enhanced, the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features, and the use of high standards of building materials and landscaping. CP51 states that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

Saved policy C3 of the West Wiltshire District Plan states that the landscape character of Special Landscape Areas (the site falls within the Corsley Heath to Chapmanslade Greensand Ridge SLA) will be conserved and enhanced and development will not be permitted which is considered to be detrimental to the high quality of these landscapes. Proposals for development essential to

the social and economic well-being of the rural community or desirable for the enjoyment of its amenities will be permitted having regard to highways, access, scale, design, materials, location, siting, landscaping and other appropriate environmental considerations.



View of stables from southeast



Views towards Cley Hill

The site slopes downhill northwest to southeast from the stables (circa 125mAOD) to Huntenhull Lane (circa 103mAOD). The surrounding area generally drops away to the southeast, and rises to a similar level (120m-130mAOD) to the southwest, before the land rises toward the peak of Cley Hill, (244mAOD), which lies 2 miles to the southwest of the site. There are no PROWs through the site, and no views from the nearby PROWs (90 metres to the west and 140 metres to the east, both linking High Street with Huntenhull Lane), or from Huntenhull Lane itself other than from the existing vehicular access due to existing field boundaries. The local topography is such that there are no public views from which the access track would be readily visible.

Notwithstanding, the access track has been positioned to follow existing field boundaries, to further reduce visibility, and the width has been kept a minimum (to accommodate a single vehicle, other than passing points at the entrance to the stable block, at the northwest corner of field 1), including the provision of a grassed central verge to further reduce any impact on the landscape. The track would pass through existing field gates between fields 1 and 2, and 2 and 3, negating any requirement to remove existing hedgerows. It would also have a similar visual appearance to the access track through the adjoining Sienna's Valley Farm to the southwest, which similarly follows the field boundary up from Huntenhull Lane.

Given that there are no important views from the site or into the site, the sensitive design and orientation of the access track would ensure that the landscape character is conserved and unharmed, in accordance with adopted policy.

Ecology

CP50 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation. The access track would necessitate the removal of circa 750sqm of poor, semi-improved grassland. The accompanying ecological appraisal (PEA) concludes that this is unlikely to have a significant biodiversity impact, given the extensive similar habitat in the local and wider landscape. Mitigation to achieve biodiversity net gain could be secured by condition; the PEA recommends that new native tree and shrub planting could be provided on the site along the site boundary to the east/south-east of the existing stable building, together with bird, bat and hedgehog boxes.

Highways and access

CP61 requires proposals to be served by safe access to the highway network. The proposal seeks to upgrade the existing access on to Huntenhull Lane. A review of available Google Street View imagery (June 2009, March and October 2011, April and September 2021 and May 2023) shows that the access has been in situ throughout that time, albeit more overgrown at some times than others, with a sharp gradient from field level to road level, and a tight left turn for vehicles exiting the site.



April 2021 Google Street View imagery



March 2011 Google Street View imagery

The provision of a realigned access at 90 degrees to the land would remove the existing tight left-hand turn, and give better visibility in both directions (which in any case is generally good, as the pictures below show).



Views to right and left from existing access.

A cleared, more formal access would also alert road users to the potential for vehicles entering the road, and provide a refuge area for pedestrians, thereby improving highway safety overall, in compliance with local and national planning policies. It is not envisaged that the proposal would result in an increase in traffic movements, but would instead relocate them from High Street and the disputed access to the north, to Huntenhull Lane to the south.

Flood Risk Assessment

As the site measures more than 1ha and is within Flood Zone 1, the NPPF requires that the application be accompanied by a proportionate Flood Risk Assessment. The proposal amounts to circa 5% of the land being developed, with 95% of the site remaining greenfield. At these scales, it is not envisaged that the proposal would increase water run-off onto the highway, or increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. Details of the final finish to the access track (including drainage) can be secured by way of condition.

Conclusion

The proposed access track has been designed and positioned to have a minimal impact on the special landscape area, and would not require the removal of any hedgerows, and would have a minimal impact on biodiversity through the loss of a relatively small area of grassland, which can be mitigated through hedgerow planting. Improvements to the existing access to the south would result in increased highway safety, and for these reasons it is hoped that the proposal can be supported.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Stokes Morgan Planning Ltd