Mere Town Council

TOWN CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

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Application No:	**PL/2023/10288**
Application Type:	**Full planning permission**
Proposal:	**Erection of a timber studio for use in association with donkey sanctuary and to provide holiday accommodation (retrospective)**
Site Address:	**Land at Wet Lane, Mere, BA12 6BA**
Planning Register Link:	https://development.wiltshire.gov.uk/pr/s/planning-application/a0i3z00001CFARM

At a meeting held on Monday, 15th January 2024, the Town Council considered the above application and has the following response to make:

No comment	
Support	
Support subject to conditions	
Object	Yes
No Objections	

The Town Council recalled that the applicant had attended Town Council meetings in 2022 explaining that he had bought 4 acres of land in Wet Lane in order to house his rescue donkeys and that he required the formation of a field access (another retrospective application) and the erection of an agricultural and livestock building. There was no mention from the applicant that it would later be necessary to expand this into a developed donkey sanctuary which, whether private or charity, could be construed as a commercial activity. The planning statement states that the studio will occasionally be let as tourist accommodation to provide financial support for this rural charity. The assertion that this charity/sanctuary needs financial support would

seem to validate the fact that it is therefore a commercial activity rather than a private one. The planning permission related to this site is for the private stabling of donkeys and the storage of associated equipment and feed and shall at no time be used for any commercial purposes whatsoever. The Town Council therefore suggests that there should be some clarification as to whether or not the activity is private or commercial.

The planning officer confirmed in his 2022 report that the site is predominately rural location within the open countryside for the purposes of the local plan and is outside the defined limits of development. It would appear that this timber studio has been built on agricultural land. Whilst the planning statement says that it has been built on what was once part of neighbouring garden, this would appear to be inaccurate as the land was part of Church Farm. There is no evidence to support the claim that there was a previous timber shed on the site of this studio. Conversely, there appears to be evidence to support that there were trees and hedges affected by this retrospective development.

The planning statement for the above application states that the timber studio is required to provide a working space for employees at the donkey sanctuary, whilst also enabling the applicant to let it out as tourist accommodation on an occasional basis that will be marketed towards couples and small families seeking a quiet countryside holiday with donkeys. It also says that it will be used for hybrid office/tourist accommodation. There are four donkeys on the site and it is believed that there is one member of staff who attends to the needs of these donkeys and it should be perfectly possibly to provide a working space for this staff member (and other staff members if necessary) within the existing barn that was erected in 2022. Therefore, there is no justification to support the need for this additional building to serve the needs of staff associated with the needs of the donkeys as a suitable alternative existing building exists on the site. Letting of the studio as tourist accommodation would be a commercial activity that would be in breach of the agricultural and equestrian use of the site.

Whilst the Town Council recognises the importance of tourism and the contribution it can make to the local economy, it could not support the development of a studio as tourist accommodation in this location as the impact on the amenity, rural character and environmental quality of the area would be detrimental and unsustainable.

Under the 2021 Environment Act, the Town Council recently agreed its biodiversity policy. The Town Council felt that this planning application does not meet the criteria within Mere Town Council's Biodiversity Policy as the application does not benefit biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats for wildlife.

Lindsey Wood
Town Clerk

Date: 17th January 2024