

8 DCSW2005/0993/O - RENEWAL OF PERMISSION SE2000/1038/O. DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS. REDEVELOPMENT FOR ENLARGED MEDITATION CENTRE, COMPRISING STUDENT SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION, DINING AND KITCHEN FACILITIES. MANAGERS AND TEACHERS ACCOMMODATION, WORKSHOP AND OFFICES. VIPASSANA TRUST, DHAMMA DIPA, HAREWOOD END, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR2 8JS

For: Vipassana Trust, Dhamma Dipa, Harewood End, Herefordshire, HR2 8JS

Date Received: 31st March, 2005

Ward: Pontrilas

Grid Ref: 50746, 26676

Expiry Date: 26th May, 2005

Local Member: Councillor G.W. Davis

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 This application relates to a scheme to redevelop and extend the meditation centre which occupies the former riding stables known as The Marches. The site is about 1km west of Pencoyd. Vehicular access is along about 2km of narrow country lanes off the A49. The unclassified road (no. 71402) leading to the site continues to a junction with the A466 about 1km away but does not appear to be suitable for motorised vehicles to the west of the application site.
- 1.2 The site is elevated being on a ridge with most of the existing building sited below the ridge top. The land falls to east and west before rising again. Substantial tree planting has been undertaken around the boundaries of this site of over 10ha. Tree planting has also been undertaken within the site.
- 1.3 Planning permission for use of the site as a meditation centre was granted in 1994 and subsequently new washroom facilities were permitted. Apart from the two-storey farmhouse and a Dutch barn the buildings are low single storey structures, some being former stables. They are mainly either timber boarded or rendered and most have corrugated sheet roofing.
- 1.4 This outline application for the remaining buildings is accompanied by a detailed site layout plan with a series of cross-sections indicating the scale, massing and levels of the new buildings. Only the means of access are not reserved for future decision. It is the renewal of a planning permission granted in October 2000.
- 1.5 The buildings would extend the present outline of the complex, although most of the buildings, according to the indicative drawings would be low. The main exception to this would be a dining/kitchen building with a reception area but this would be sited to the north-west of the shower block and on lower ground. Two courtyards would be

formed by the proposed student accommodation buildings. A workshop would be built about 40m to the west of the main complex and a car parking area with 39 spaces would be sited at the northern apex of the site. The farmhouse would be extended to provide offices and staff accommodation.

- 1.6 The meditation hall and teachers accommodation also approved in October 2000 has been implemented such that the meditation hall is erected and is in use. The teachers accommodation rooms have been revised under planning permission granted in November 2004. Work has commenced on these two buildings.

2. Policies

2.1 Department of the Environment

PPS.7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy CTC.6 - Landscape Features
 Policy CTC.9 - Development Requirements
 Policy TSM.1 - Tourism Development
 Policy TSM.2 - Tourism Development
 Policy LR.2 - Leisure and Recreation Development

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

Policy C.1 - Development within Open Countryside
 Policy C.9 - Landscape Features
 Policy TSM.1 - General Tourism Provision
 Policy R.1 - Provision of New Recreational Facilities
 Policy GD.1 - General Development Criteria
 Policy T.1A - Environmental Sustainability and Reducing the Need to Travel

2.4 Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

Policy S.2 - Development Requirements
 Policy S.6 - Transport
 Policy DR.1 - Design
 Policy DR.2 - Land Use and Activity

These policies do not raise issues substantially different from the provisions of policies in the Development Plan.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 SH940905PF Conversion of stables into sleeping accommodation and meditation units - Approved 07.09.94
- SH950956PF Installation of septic tank, tertiary treatment system and drainfield - Approved 18.10.95
- SH960701PF Proposed replacement washroom facilities - Approved 30.07.96

SW2000/1038/O	Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment for enlarged meditation centre, comprising student sleeping accommodation, dining and kitchen facilities, manager and teacher's accommodation, workshop and administration offices	-	Approved 19.10.00
SW2000/1041/F	Construction of new single storey meditation building, and construction of 2 no. single storey teacher's accommodation rooms	-	Approved 19.10.00
SW2004/3452/F	Erection of 2 new single storey teacher/s accommodation rooms	-	Approved 19.11.04

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Environment Agency raises no objections but recommends that a condition is imposed upon any planning permission granted.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager recommends that a condition be imposed upon the planning permission.
- 4.3 The Head of Environmental Health & Trading Standards raises no objection and also states that the use of a septic tank will require building regulations approval.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Pencoyd Parish Council has no objection.
- 5.2 Llanwarne Parish Council has no objection.
- 5.3 Four letters of objection have been received from:

Mr. D. Snow, The Hall, Pencoyd, HR2 8NG
Mr. A. J. Snell, Pencoyd Court Farm, St. Owens Cross, HR2 8JY
Mrs. T. Williams, Trevase Farm Cottage, St. Owens Cross, HR2 8ND
R. F. & E. A. Pursey, Trevase Farm, St. Owens Cross, HR2 8ND

The main points being:

- out of keeping and incongruous building in area, further on raised ground
- bright lights ruin night view
- surprised at ease with which development granted permission
- nothing added or brought to community, i.e. no local services nor local employment opportunities
- occupants change every 8 days, traffic coming and going along single track road with few passing places
- no governing body as it is an hotel and a school effectively

- Dhamma Dipa walk local lanes never speaking to nor acknowledging others.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The main issues are considered to be the principle of renewing the planning permission granted on 19th October, 2000. The issues connected to the renewal are whether or not there have been any material change in circumstances and or planning policies. There are also matters raised by objections to traffic, the contribution of the meditation centre to the community and the impact of existing development in the countryside.
- 6.2 At the time that planning permission was granted originally for the development of the meditation centre which is the subject of this renewal application, planning permission was also granted for a single-storey meditation centre and two single-storey teachers accommodation rooms. The meditation centre has been erected and is in use in connection with the existing buildings that include stabling blocks and a Dutch barn that are used for housing for residents. The two teachers blocks of accommodation were revised in design, such that they required planning permission granted in November 2004. These two buildings are in the process of construction.
- 6.3 A traffic count was undertaken at the time of the original permission. The majority of students either walk from the A49 bus stop or are picked up by an estate car that the Vipassana Trust run back and forth to the A49 bus stop. A number of overseas visitors travel from Victoria (London) to Gloucester and then on to Ross-on-Wye. This movement of people is not every day but is every 8 days on average.
- 6.4 It is understood that the Vipassana Trust use local services such as plumbers and builders, increasingly as works progress on site, and try to source local food for their kitchen. Therefore it is not considered that the Trust have no connection with the local community. This is though not a matter considered to have any planning policy implications for the application.
- 6.5 Further discussion will have to take place between your officers and the Trust regarding light pollution, although this should be placed in the context of the screening already in place around the erected meditation centre and the distant views of light visible. This issue strictly relates to a building already erected, however it is considered appropriate for a condition relating to external lighting being placed on this application in the event that planning permission is granted.
- 6.6 There are considered to be no reasonable grounds for withholding renewal of this planning permission for what is an identical scheme to that approved just under five years ago. There have been no changes in planning policies in particular those contained in the emerging Unitary Development Plan that raise substantive policy issues. Issues raised relate to the meditation hall, the subject of a separate planning permission, traffic generation and the local concerns of residents to the use of this site. The buildings proposed will be single-storey, the predominant building being the existing house used for offices and accommodation, the mediation hall and down slope from the meditation hall the shower block. Materials will be important, however that is

a matter that can be considered within the remit of the detailed or reserved matters application.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. **A02 (Time limit for submission of reserved matters (outline permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. **A03 (Time limit for commencement (outline permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3. **A04 (Approval of reserved matters)**

Reason: To enable the local planning authority to exercise proper control over these aspects of the development.

4. **A05 (Plans and particulars of reserved matters)**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5. **The premises shall be used as a residential meditation centre and for no other purpose, including any purpose within Class C2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 or any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification.**

Reason: An alternative use may generate traffic that could not be accommodated acceptably on the local road network and to protect the local amenity.

6. **No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for the provision of foul drainage works has been approved by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment.

7. **Details for external lighting shall be the subject of the prior written approval of the local planning authority.**

Reason: In order to reduce the impact of the development when viewed in the wider landscape.

Informative(s):

1. **N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.