

9 DCSE2005/2667/F - PROPOSED VISITOR CENTRE INCORPORATING CAFE, RETAIL AREA AND PUBLIC CONVENIENCES AT GOODRICH CASTLE, GOODRICH, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 6HX

For: Mr R Harding per Hook Mason Ltd, 11 Castle Street, Hereford HR1 2NL

Date Received: 12th August 2005 Ward: Kerne Bridge Grid Ref: 57546, 19647

Expiry Date: 7th October 2005

Local Member: Councillor Mrs R F Lincoln

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The site which is the subject of the application comprises the car park and adjoining open area of Goodrich Castle. The car park is at the northern end of a private road extending northwards from the crossroads in the village of Goodrich. A ridge of higher land along the eastern boundary divides the car park from the lower land in the River Wye valley to the east; to the west the land falls but there are substantial clumps of trees, with an area of woodland to the north and housing to the south. A path links the car park to the castle which is about 300m to the north.
- 1.2 It is proposed to demolish the existing small refreshment kiosk and toilets which are at the northern end of the car park together with the visitors' facility built on the castle's Barbican. A new, larger visitors' centre would be constructed on the car park. This would be about 24m long x 10.6m wide with a hipped roof. The external elevations would be horizontal boarding with wide areas of glazing, some of which with the entrance doors would be shuttered or covered by 'barn doors' when the facility is closed. The roof would be corrugated metal sheeting. The southern end wall would be set back to provide a covered but otherwise open area for seating, with additional space for the cafe within the main building. In addition there would be a retail and interpretation area of 65m² plus toilets, office staff room and stores.
- 1.3 The building, which is much larger than the existing, would be sited towards the middle of the upper car park. This is dictated by the public footpath which crosses the site and the requirement for an access road. The number of car parking spaces would therefore be reduced.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance

- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| PPS7 | - | Sustainable Development in Rural Areas |
| PPG21 | - | Tourism |

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

- | | | |
|-------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Policy TSM1 | - | Tourism Development |
| Policy CTC1 | - | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |

Policy CTC2 - Area of Great Landscape Value

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

Policy C1 - Development Within Open Countryside
 Policy C4 - AONB Landscape Protection
 Policy C5 - Development within AONB
 Policy C8 - Development Within Area of Great Landscape Value
 Policy GD1 - General development criteria
 Policy TM1 - General Tourism Provision
 Policy TM8 - Provision of New and Improvement of Existing Tourist Attractions
 Policy TM10 - Proposals within the Wye Valley AONB

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft)

Policy RST1 - Criteria for Recreation, Sport and Tourism Development
 Policy RST2 - Recreation, Sport and Tourism Development within AONB's
 Policy LA1 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

3. Planning History

3.1 There have not been any recent applications relating to this site.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 English Heritage do not wish to offer any comments and recommend that the application be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's specialist conservation advice.

4.2 Welsh Water recommend that conditions be imposed regarding drainage.

Internal Council Advice

4.3 Traffic Manager has no objection to the grant of permission.

4.4 Cultural Services Manager advises that "the development is required in order to improve visitor facilities on site and to update the general appearance of the site. I would fully support the application and would confirm that we are working very closely with English Heritage on the proposal."

4.5 The Conservation Manager has no objection in principle subject to satisfactory choice of materials and finishes.

5. Representations

5.1 A "Justification Statement" has been submitted which is reproduced as an appendix to this report.

5.2 Goodrich Parish Council make the following observations:

"The Parish Council agree in principle to the proposed visitor centre incorporating cafe, retail area and public conveniences, providing adequate provision is made for parking with an additional condition for overflow parking for events.

The car park was originally provided to relieve parking problems within the village. As the aim appears to increase the number of visitors, it would appear to be a backward move to reduce the number of car park spaces. There is no provision for coach parking or turning.

It is essential that Castle Lane residents retain access for the emergency services and that the lane is not used for overflow parking.

Footpath GR2. This is not mentioned on the plans but should not be overlooked, as local people use the path regularly."

5.3 A letter from the Ramblers Association raises no objection to the temporary footpath diversion which is proposed.

5.4 9 letters have been received supportive of the principle of improving facilities and security but expressing reservations regarding the following matters:

- (1) the main concern is the inadequate capacity of the car park which would be reduced from 200 to 120 spaces;
- (2) it is pointed out that the car park is also used by walkers (for Wye Valley Walk and local walks) and is totally inadequate when there are special events;
- (3) the last such event (August Bank Holiday weekend) saw double parking all along Castle Lane leaving only a single lane making emergency access difficult; many other cars turned around with parking all over village - photographs have been submitted;
- (4) this result is severe congestion in the village, damage to verges and banks;
- (5) capacity should be increased not reduced and overflow car park is essential;
- (6) charging for parking is strongly opposed as will encourage free parking in Castle Lane, add greatly to parking chaos and nuisance to residents and could compromise safety of pedestrians;
- (7) parking restriction in Castle Lane should be imposed and in view of traffic flows the road should be adopted;
- (8) new building should be on site of existing cafe - a delay whilst diverting the footpath is not a good reason against this;
- (9) playground is unnecessary as would reduce parking spaces, disturb wildlife in woodland and peaceful environment, castle is attraction enough, encourage more traffic and one proposed at village school;
- (10) the current public footpath to the castle is not useable and adjoining path is used but if this is controlled by English Heritage public footpath must be restored and fully accessible by walkers;
- (11) disabled parking spaces and cycle racks would obstruct the footpath, and
- (12) disappointment that mundane in appearance rather than interesting and innovative.

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. Officer's Appraisal

- 6.1 This proposal raises two main issues: the effect on rural character bearing in mind that this area is within the Wye Valley AONB and whether the car park would be adequate in size. As noted in paragraph 1.1. along the eastern boundary forms a rim which screens the site from lower land to the east. The proposed building is not high, with a shallow hipped roof. To the west the land falls away but there is existing planting which could be supplemented. This should ensure that the building, even if visible from a distance, would not be intrusive in the landscape.
- 6.2 The design and material are acceptable, in my opinion. The shallow roof has necessitated sheeting but this is preferable to a taller building with traditional roofing materials.
- 6.3 From the information available it is clear that the car park is of sufficient size for most of the year. The problems arise from the special events held several times a year (3 events covering 7 days are being held this year plus evening plays). The number of parking spaces would be reduced from 101 with 3 coach spaces to 60 with 3 coach spaces or 69 for cars only. However if marshals are employed capacity at present would be about 154 spaces and up to 120 if the visitor centre is built. English Heritage is exploring two options: providing overspill parking or, if this is impracticable, amending the events programme to reflect the limits of parking on site. The proposal to charge for parking does not require planning permission and I understand that the fee would be re-imbursed for those visiting the castle i.e. only walkers would pay. Castle Lane is a private road and parking cannot therefore be restricted by the local highway authority. Whilst the problems experienced by local residents are appreciated they do not occur frequently and in view of English Heritage's undertaking to take appropriate steps it is concluded that on this issue there are insufficient grounds to refuse planning permission. As noted in paragraph 4.3 the Traffic Manager does not object to this application.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 B01 (Samples of external materials)

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.

3 G04 (Landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

4 G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

5 W01 (Foul/surface water drainage)

Reason: To protect the integrity of the public sewerage system.

6 W02 (No surface water to connect to public system)

Reason: To prevent hydraulic overloading of the public sewerage system, to protect the health and safety of existing residents and ensure no detriment to the environment.

7 W03 (No drainage run-off to public system)

Reason: To prevent hydraulic overload of the public sewerage system and pollution of the environment.

Informatives:

1 If a connection is required to the public sewerage system, the developer is advised to contact the Dwr Cymru Welsh Water's Network Development Consultants on tel: 01443 331155

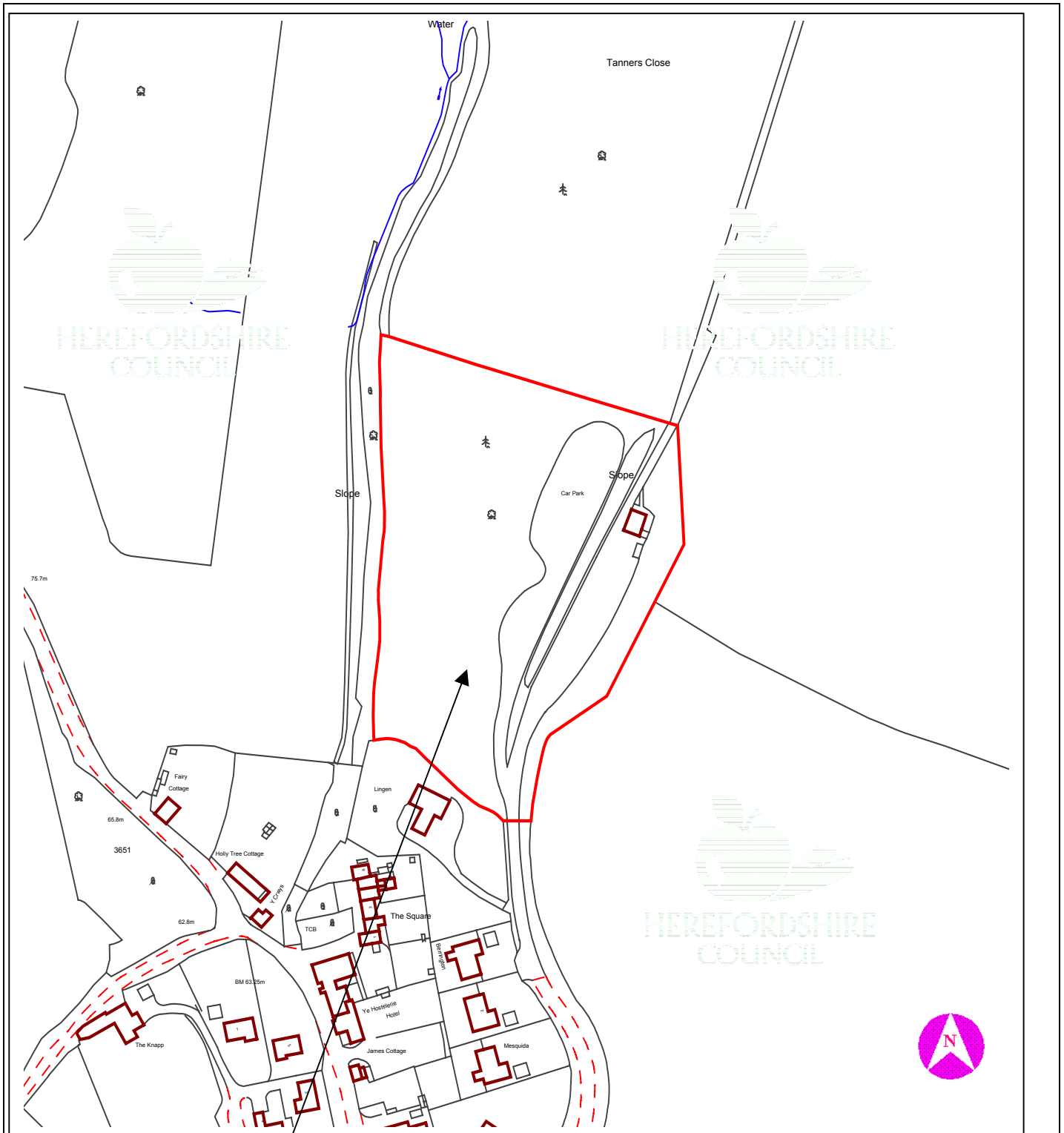
2 N15 – Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission

Decision:

Notes:

Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSE2005/2667/F

SCALE : 1 : 2500

SITE ADDRESS : Goodrich Castle, Goodrich, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6HX

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