

CASE OFFICER'S (EF) REPORT ON APPLICATION NUMBER 08/02391/FUL

Consultee Responses:

Highways: No objection

Basildon Parish Council: Basildon Parish Council has considered PA08/02391 - Child Beale Park, Temporary facilities for the Dolphin Centre - and supports the proposal because it believes that the advantages of keeping the Dolphin Centre as a going concern whilst their premises at Pangbourne are being re-built outweigh the objections which might be raised on the score of appearance. Council considers, however, that a strict time limit should be put upon the period for which a temporary permission is valid. Council also understands that these proposals may give rise to some operating difficulties but takes the view that this is a matter to be resolved by Child Beale Park and the Dolphin Centre.

Natural England: No objection

Letters of neighbour comment: 0 letters of neighbour comment received

Description:

This full planning application seeks temporary permission for the storage of canoes and kayaks, including changing and toilet facilities on land adjacent to Beale Lake. This permission is for a temporary use during the re-building of the current Adventure Dolphin facilities at Pangbourne. The applicants have submitted a statement of justification in support of the application. This consent does not allow for any recreational activities to be carried out on Beale Lake and any access to the river by the cut approved under application 00/01195/FUL is subject to the conditions on that consent. As such this application is for the storage of equipment only as shown on the submitted plans.

Relevant Planning History:

Of particular relevance to this decision are applications 00/01195/FUL and application 07/01717/FUL.

Planning permission for the creation of a new cut between Beale Park Lake and the river Thames, with footbridge to allow for occasional boat access to and from the lake was approved subject to conditions on 6th November 2001. Conditions were placed on the consent to restrict the use of the cut to a maximum of 20 days per year (condition 5) and a condition stating that no mooring of boats shall take place on Beale Lake other than on those days when events are taking place (condition 7). Both conditions were attached as a means to limit the use of the lake and to protect its tranquillity and therefore avoid harm to the character of the area.

In 2007 application 07/01717/FUL was submitted which comprised a S75 application. This sought to vary the conditions on consent 00/01195/FUL to allow for unrestricted access of the cut and to allow for the mooring of a historic boat on the lake. This application was refused and the decision was upheld by the Planning Inspector in the decision of the 13th August 2008. The Inspector's decision clearly highlights the sensitivity and tranquillity of Beale Lake.

Principle of Development:

Beale Lake is located adjacent to the River Thames (to which it is joined by a permitted cut). The site is located outside any defined settlement boundary and is sensitively located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' recognises that leisure activities are vital to the rural economy and advises Authorities that in areas that are recognised to be of scenic or recreational value that there will be a demand for activities. PPS7 seeks to ensure that such uses are appropriately located so as not to conflict with the character and natural value of the area.

Policy PD6 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016, Saved Policies 2008 seeks to ensure that land outside of settlements is safeguarded for its own sake and should only be used for purposes that are appropriate to such locations. Reference is made specifically under criteria 2(i) to 'activities that can only be undertaken there' to which this application is considered to comply. The temporary use is associated with a water based activity which is currently undertaken in Pangbourne, the neighbouring settlement.

Policy ENV.18 of the Local Plan sets out criteria against which to assess proposals for development within the countryside. This application does not strictly fall under any of the permissible categories however it is a recreational use which by reason of the nature of the activity requires a rural location in proximity to the river. The application site is within the confines of an existing tourist attraction, Beale Wildlife Park and as such the proposal seeks to utilise the existing facilities such as parking and safe access and security measures that this site provides. The applicants have submitted a statement showing other alternative options within the vicinity to demonstrate that this comprises the best available site.

The proposal seeks temporary permission for the siting of storage containers to allow for the continuing operation of an existing community facility while redevelopment works take place. The principle of the development is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policy DP6 of the Berkshire Structure Plan and Policy ENV.18 of the Local Plan. The details of the application will be examined in accordance with the relevant development plan policies.

Impact on character of the area and the North Wessex Downs AONB:

The sensitivity and the attractive setting of the lake is recognised and highlighted by the Inspector who states that 'neither this [tranquillity of the lake] or its rural setting and appearance are undermined significantly by the adjacent, well-landscaped car park for the large number of visitors to Beale Park wildlife park and gardens, nor by that attraction's buildings, which impinge only slightly on views of one corner of the lake.'

One of the key differences between this application and the appeal scheme reference 07/01717/FUL is that this application does not seek to moor boats on the lake or utilise the lake itself. The proposed storage is to occur on the edge of the lake only. Furthermore this scheme, which is of a temporary nature, does not seek to alter or impact on the existing conditions which control and protect the use of the Lake. The existing restrictions are retained and as such the impact of the proposed scheme is materially different to that examined under the 07/01717/FUL application.

The area identified for storage is located adjacent to the car park and at the southern end of the lake such that it is in close proximity to the existing built form within the site. This area is only visible from within the car park and the proposed willow screen is considered to provide for a sensitive form of screening which can be seen from the indicative photographs to fit well within the site.

The site is currently rugged and untended and following the expiration of any temporary consent the applicants intend to landscape the site to create a meadow grassland area which will itself enhance appearance of this part of the site. Such works will be secured through a planning condition with the details to be approved by the Local Planning Authority.

It is considered that the temporary nature of the proposed use and the public interest associated with this scheme are important material considerations. The storage containers have been designed so as to minimise any visual impact in terms of their siting and size and it is considered that giving consideration to the temporary nature of any consent and the public need for this recreational facility to continue to function throughout the construction period, such considerations outweigh the temporary and localised visual impact of this development.

Impact on the existing use of the site:

The proposed use is not considered to have an adverse impact on the existing use of the site. The parking provided is considered to be sufficient and no objections are raised by the Highways Officer.

Recommendation: Conditional approval

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