

Appendix 2 – 24 June 2021 Committee minutes

APPLICATION NO DOV/20/00589 - THE OLD RECTORY, MONGEHAM CHURCH CLOSE, GREAT MONGEHAM

The Committee was shown an aerial view, drawings, a plan and photographs of the application site which was situated within the settlement confines of Great Mongeham and within a conservation area. The Senior Planner advised that planning permission was sought for a change of use of land as a wedding and events venue, with the erection of a marquee and works to an outbuilding to facilitate its conversion to a toilet block. As an update to the report, she advised that further objections had been received which raised no new matters for consideration. Comments had also been received from KCC's Public Rights of Way (PROW) team in response to re-consultation. Its objection by reason that there would be a significant increase in traffic using Mongeham Church Close which was also a PROW had now been lifted.

Members were advised that the main dwelling on the site, the Old Rectory, was a Grade II-listed building whose walled garden would be used for civil ceremonies. The number of weddings or events would be restricted to 30 per year, with a maximum number of 50 guests. There would be 17 parking spaces without the need for double parking. Noise levels would be controlled by the use of a noise limiter. Whilst the proposal would cause a short-term increase in traffic and competition for on-street parking during events, the public benefits of the scheme were considered to outweigh these negative aspects, the benefits being the bringing back into use of a disused listed outbuilding and the promotion of expenditure within the local economy which would contribute towards the social viability of the area. Furthermore, it was considered that the proposal would not cause harm to the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area, nor would it cause harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupants or to wildlife habitats.

In response to Members' queries and concerns, the Senior Planner advised that a disabled car parking space could be included, and that the toilet block would be accessible by wheelchair. She explained that the improved visibility splays at Mongeham Church Close and Northbourne Road were required because of the intensification in the use of the access (currently limited to residential use) that would arise from the proposal. KCC Highways had recommended the provision of a bus-stop clearway in Northbourne Road to prevent undesirable parking across the bus-stop. The Principal Planner clarified that the requirement to provide a minimum number of parking spaces rather than a maximum had followed from advice given by KCC Highways.

Councillor Bates questioned why KCC's PROW team had withdrawn its objection. Whilst 30 weddings a year did not appear to be many, the majority of them were likely to take place between May and August which meant an average of at least one wedding a week. 17 parking spaces for 50 guests was not sufficient in his view. Guests would almost certainly park in Northbourne Road and in Mongeham Church Close, causing congestion and inconvenience for local residents. Furthermore, the frequency of these events during the summer months would impede local residents' enjoyment of their gardens. Councillor Richardson agreed, commenting that traffic congestion would be a weekly occurrence during the summer months. He expressed concerns about noise levels and questioned why the proposed visibility splays did not conform with the current guidance.

The Senior Planner advised that the applicant had initially proposed 60 events per year with a maximum number of 200 guests per wedding. The application had been 'live' for a year and there had been a good deal of consultation during that time with KCC Highways which had

withdrawn its objection on the grounds that the highways impact would not be severe. A minibus service for guests would help to reduce the number of cars, and the submission of a travel management plan had been attached as a condition, the latter requiring approval by KCC Highways. In respect of noise issues, the Principal Planner advised that advice had been sought from the Environmental Health team which had carried out tests at the site. The recommendation was based on their expert advice. The installation of a noise limiter would be required by condition. The Chairman clarified that a noise limiter would automatically cut off the music if it exceeded a certain number of decibels.

Councillor Bond queried where catering and other support staff would park. He was sceptical about plans to bus guests in from Deal given the pressure of parking in that town. Whilst a travel management plan was well intended, it was his view that a significant number of guests would do whatever was most convenient for themselves, including parking where they liked. He expressed concerns about the impact on the church, particularly if it was holding weddings at the same time as the application site. In his view parking and traffic had not been properly addressed and would have a significant impact on local residents and the church. He commented that condition 15, as currently worded, would probably enable the applicant to keep the marquee up all through the summer months given the probable frequency of weddings and other events. Whilst the proposal ticked some boxes, it was in the wrong area.

The Senior Planner stressed that, unless the travel management plan was found to be satisfactory by KCC Highways, the condition could not be discharged and the applicant would be in breach of conditions. She clarified that the condition relating to the marquee was there because the dates of events were unknown and it would ensure that it was not left up for the entire year. The background to the visibility splays was set out in paragraphs 2.18 and 2.19 of the report. As a result of discrepancies between the visibility splays shown in legal documents and those physically evident, KCC Highways had recommended that a topographical survey should be undertaken. The survey had been reviewed by KCC Highways and, whilst the splays were not in accordance with current guidance, they would be an improvement on the current situation once vegetation had been cut back by the highway authority.

In response to a suggestion by Councillor Beaney, the Principal Planner advised that conditions could be strengthened to require that parking on site was to be used only for guests. In addition, the minibus service could be designated for both guests and staff. She advised Members that they had the option to grant temporary planning permission which would allow the applicants to test their travel management plan. The Senior Planner clarified that the applicants had stated that they would not park on site when events were on and this could be conditioned. Councillor Beaney stated that he was in favour of supporting a local business if conditions could be strengthened in the ways suggested, including a reduction in the number of events to 25. It was not a large wedding venue and he believed that many people would travel together by car.

It was moved by Councillor D G Beaney and duly seconded that Application No DOV/20/00589 be APPROVED as per the report recommendation subject to amendments/additions to conditions as follows: (a) 3-year temporary permission; (b) Number of weddings/events being reduced to a maximum of 25 per year and number of heads to 50 per event; (c) Removal of the bus-stop clearway at the stop in Northbourne Road; (d) Provision of a minimum of 17 car parking spaces as shown on the plans, to include a disabled parking space; (e) Provision of a guest and staff minibus service between the venue and locations in Deal; and (f) Provision of a Travel Management Plan to encourage sustainable travel including measures regarding staff parking and owners parking off-site during events. On being put to the vote, the motion FAILED. It was moved by Councillor T A Bond and duly seconded that Application No

DOV/20/00589 be DEFERRED to allow the applicants to explore the possibility of providing additional on-site parking and for further details of the traffic management plan.

On being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That, notwithstanding the Officer's recommendation, Application No DOV/20/00589 be DEFERRED pending further details of the traffic management plan and to enable the applicants to explore options for additional on-site parking.