

Maidstone Borough Council

Mr Peter Court
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Chief Executive

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Date: 1 March 2016
My ref: 16/500350/PAPL

Dear Mr Court,

SITE: Land at Cripple Street, Cripple Street, ME15 6BA
PROPOSAL: Pre App (letter) - Development of Park and Ride Facility

Thank you for your enquiry seeking planning advice for the aforementioned development proposal. I would make the following comments regarding the pre-application proposal.

Site

The site is located on the south side of Cripple Street in the open countryside and is designated as an Area of Local Landscape Importance in the Local Plan 2000. The urban area of Maidstone is located to the east of the site. To the north on the opposite side of Cripple Street is a field located in the open countryside which has recently been granted planning permission at appeal for a development of 36 houses. To the west of the site is open countryside, a Site of Nature Conservation Interest and Loose Valley Conservation Area.

The land has a sloping topography with the land sloping west towards the Loose Valley. This gradient increases beyond the western boundary of the proposed site. The site appears to be rough grassland used for grazing.

Proposal

Development of a park and ride site.

Assessment of proposed development

Park and ride bus services constitute a sustainable form of travel and can help reduce traffic congestion and pollution if they are provided in the correct location.

New development in the countryside is tightly restricted under the terms of Development Plan Policy and Central Government Guidance. Policy ENV28 of the Local Plan 2000 seeks to prevent development which would harm the character and appearance of the open countryside, and confines development to certain listed exceptions. Your proposal in this case is not within one of the Policy exceptions and is therefore contrary to the provisions of Policy ENV28.

The construction of a park and ride site would result in a significant amount of hard surfacing and large numbers of parked vehicles which would appear incongruous in this rural setting and, in my view, would be visually harmful to the character and appearance of the open countryside, Area of Local Landscape Importance and setting of the Loose Valley Conservation Area. The site is particularly prominent due to the gradient of the land and surrounding topography and a park and ride site in this location would be visible from long range views from within the Loose Valley.

In addition, this is not considered an appropriate location for a park and ride site in highways terms. The A229 Loose Road / Boughton Lane / Cripple Street junction is operating at capacity and there is congestion at this junction at peak periods, with limited options for further capacity improvements. A park and ride site is likely to generate around 2000 additional vehicle trips per day and these additional trips could not be accommodated at the existing junction without causing further congestion. In addition, the route into Maidstone centre from this location would not be able to accommodate a bus priority route and is therefore not suited to a park and ride site. I would also question the size of the site and whether it is of a sufficient size to accommodate around 1000 vehicles, which is approximately the number required for a viable park and ride site.

Summary

A park and ride site in this location would result in harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside and Area of Local Landscape Important and the setting of the Loose Valley Conservation Area. In addition, it is also considered that the existing highway network could not accommodate a park and ride site in this location and a priority bus route could not be provided into the town centre.

The advice given above does not indicate any formal decision by the Council as Local Planning Authority. Any views or opinions are given in good faith and to the best of ability, without prejudice to the formal consideration of any planning application. The final decision on any application that you may make can only be taken after the Council has consulted local people, statutory consultees and any other interested parties. The final decision on an application will then be made by senior officers or by the Council's Planning Committee and will be based on all of the information available at that time.

The advice will be carefully considered in reaching a decision or recommendation on any resulting application; subject to the proviso that circumstances and information may change or come to light that could alter that position. It should be noted that the weight given to pre-application advice notes will decline over time.

Yours sincerely



for Head of Planning and Development

Case Officer: Andrew Jolly

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