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Planning and Development
South Holland District Council
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6th June 2016

Dear Sir/ Madam

CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND TO PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND THE ERECTION OF FENCING ON SOUTHERN AND WESTERN BOUNDARIES.

LAND SOUTH OF ROMAN ROAD AND WEST OF WOODGATE ROAD, MOULTON CHAPEL, PE12 0XF

Please find enclosed an application as described above for the change of use of agricultural land to open space and the erection of a boundary fence to facilitate the relocation of an area of open space. Carter Jonas LLP Cambridge has been instructed to submit this application on behalf of the Crown Estate.

PROPOSAL

Two consultations with local residents have been carried out by Moulton Chapel Parish Council to understand how often an existing area of protected open space located off Cekhira Avenue is used by the local residents. While the number of responses received was quite low (10 participants), the results received showed that in general the site was under-used. There are a number of reasons for the under-use and the opinions from the residents are set out within the accompanying survey summarises that are lodged as part of this application, the following section outlines these. The current and allocated area of open space is owned by the Crown Estate and comprises an area of grassland that is mainly used by the occasional dog walker. Given the limited use it is proposed that this land be turned back to agricultural land. Such works do not require planning permission and is therefore not included within this application. To ensure the publically accessible open space is not lost, it is proposed that a new area of open space is created in a more suitable location within the village on land south of Roman Road. The proposed development therefore seeks planning permission for the change of use of agricultural land to public open space.

The existing area of open space that is situated south of Cekhira Avenue comprises 2.8 acres of grass land with boundaries of dense vegetation. The public open space is proposed to be moved to a site of 1.4 acres that is south of Roman Road and west of Woodgate Road (see Relocation Plan). A boundary fence is also proposed and will be erected on the southern and western boundaries of the site.

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RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

This section of the statement sets out the relevant planning policy for the proposed development.

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Paragraph 73 states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

South Holland Adopted Local Plan 2006

Policy LT2 – Safeguarding Open Space for Recreation and Leisure

"Development which would result in the loss of public open space, parks or playing fields will only be permitted provided that:

1. Alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made in the locality; or
2. There is an excess of provision taking into account the long term recreation and amenity value of such provision; or
3. Sport, recreation and leisure facilities can be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site."

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2016 Draft

South East Lincolnshire consulted on the plan between 8th January and 19th February 2016.

Policy 30 Promotive Safe, Accessible Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities

"Development shall contribute to the creation of socially cohesive and inclusive communities; reducing health inequalities; and improving the community's health and well-being."

South Holland Open Space SPD – Sustainability Appraisal (2007)

The South Holland Open Space SPD sets out where the reduction of open space may be considered to be appropriate. This is addressed below:

"The redevelopment or enhancement of areas of open space, be they play spaces or sports pitches can, respectively, result in increased usage of the site or a site being brought back into active use. Although such actions do not actually result in an increase of open space (some may result in a decrease) the benefits of having a site that is more actively used outweigh the losses, and increase the amenity value of an open space. When considering proposals for the re-development on part of an open space the scope for such re-development to increase the value of the area for local communities will be considered."

JUSTIFICATION

The proposed relocation of the open space as highlighted above is to enable an underutilised area of open space to be converted back into agricultural land and the open space to be relocated to a more suitable area within the village. The new area of open space will be located outside the settlement boundary between Roman Road and Woodgate Road. Although the site is located outside the settlement boundary, the proposed location well connected to the heart of the village and is close to the village services and facilities. The plot is located to the rear of the existing community centre and access to the open space will be provided by an existing access that serves the community centre. The car park that serves the community centre will also be used by those using the proposed area of open space, although it is considered that most users will travel on foot to the site.

Moulton Parish Council carried out two surveys with their local residents to established how well used the existing area of public open space was. Although approximately 10 participants took part in each of the surveys, 70% of these said they did not currently use the Moulton Chapel Playing Field. The subjects that were raised from the surveys are as follows:

- Difficult to access
- Don't know where the site is
- Poorly located
- Uninteresting

These comments and the results of the surveys suggest that the open space is not well used by the residents of Moulton Chapel. From the more extensive written responses (see attached summaries) it is apparent that the main reason people do not use the site as much as they would is due to the to access difficulties given its location on the eastern edge of the village. By locating the site nearer to the community centre means the space will be in the heart of the village and will be in a safer location in terms of access, security and surveillance.

Policy LT2 comments on how the resulting loss of public open space will only be permitted if there is an alternative provision with an equivalent community benefit within the locality. It is considered that although the amount of open space is being reduced by approximately half (from 2.8 acres to 1.4 acres) the site is considered to be situated more appropriately within the village and will therefore become more extensively used. Given that there is to be a good level of alternative provision provided it is considered that the proposal complies with Part 1 of Policy LT2. The proposed relocation also complies with the South Holland Open Space SPD which comments on how the benefits of providing a more actively used site can outweigh the losses and increase the amenity value of an area of open space. A site that is well used, accessible and safe is considered to have greater amenity value and contribute more to the wider community. The existing facility is not well used and therefore, the relocation should be supported.

The boundary fence will be provided on the western and southern sides of the site. It will be 2 metres in height and green in colour. The height and design of the fence ensures that an effective boundary is provided between the site and the farm land beyond. Its size and design is considered not to lead to an incongruous addition within the countryside and therefore will not jeopardise the appearance of the wider countryside character.

SUMMARY

It is considered that the relocation or the amenity space and the change of use of the new site is acceptable in national and local policy terms. It is also evident that the proposal also has some support from the local community and the research provided from the consultations suggests that the existing site is underutilised. In light of this, the proposed relocation of the public open space would be an enhancement to the local facilities provided, delivering a more accessible and attractive site for the public benefit. It is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted in this instance.

Attached to this application are the following documents:

- Completed Application Forms and Certificates
- Full Application Fee
- Survey Summaries – 11032013 & 10112013
- Location Plan – 1023729-16-01
- Relocation Plan – 1023729-16-03
- Fencing Details

I trust you have all that is required to register this application. Should you have any questions or concerns please do get in contact by any of the means below.

Yours sincerely,



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