

APPLICATION NUMBER:	LW/07/1016	ITEM NUMBER:	2
APPLICANTS NAME(S):	Longley Kier	PARISH / WARD:	Lewes / Lewes Bridge
PROPOSAL:	Planning Application for Twelve month temporary use of land to park construction staff private vehicles and three steel containers		
SITE ADDRESS:	Temporary Car Park, Southerham Lane, Southerham, East Sussex,		
GRID REF:	TQ 4209		

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1. SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL

1.1 The site is located adjacent to the north-western side of the Southerham roundabout which is on the A27, to the south-eastern side of Lewes and south of the Culfail Tunnel. The site is open and comprises an area of about 0.4ha. It is currently disused. The site is in the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

1.2 The application has been submitted because the applicants, Longley Kier, are in contract with Home Office Custodial Property on a major construction project at HM Prison Lewes to extend the prison. This is part of the governments programme to increase prison places across the UK by the end of 2008. The prison establishment has no capacity for the parking of the large numbers of construction vehicles or private cars of construction staff and proposes that the application site is used for such purposes during the construction period. A shuttle bus link would be provided to the construction site at the Prison.

1.3 A separate planning application has also been submitted to the Council for internal works to upgrade existing meeting facilities within the prison. This, together with the extension currently being built, is anticipated to result in an extra 170 construction workers and a further 40-50 employees to manage security operations on site in the next month, when the development works are likely to peak. In this respect, the proposed off site parking is seen as a practical solution to a short term requirement.

1.4 The application proposes the use of the land in question for a temporary period of 12 months to facilitate the parking of up to 100 cars and the siting of three steel containers (each measuring 6m long by 2.4m wide and 2.4m high), for the storage of perishable building materials (such as plaster and plaster board/sanitary provisions). The proposed off site temporary parking plan illustrates the siting of the proposed containers in the northern part of the site adjacent to the eastern side of the disused former railway line.

1.5 The application does not propose the removal of any trees but may involve some upgrading of the existing surface with a type of hardcore, and subject to agreement, a tarmacadam finish. The applicant has agreed that the surface can be reinstated to its former condition following the expiry of the 12 month temporary permission if required.

1.6 The access to the car parking area would be from the A27 at Southerham, and the applicants would organise suitable shuttle transport for personnel to and from the construction site at Lewes Prison on a twice daily basis. The car park will be open from 06.30 to 18.30 Monday to Friday and 06.30 to 13.00 Saturday.

1.7 If considered necessary, and with agreement from the proprietor, appropriate security and safety lighting would be installed.

1.8 The project manager has confirmed that construction works at the prison are already underway. Parking for construction workers currently takes place in roads surrounding the prison. The parking required at Southerham is to reduce pressure for parking in the vicinity of the prison. In addition, the prison occupies a confined site which has security issues and it is therefore essential to provide parking off-site.

1.9 The programme of construction works is due to end in August/September 2008, so the proposed parking area at Southerham would be required for a further eleven months or possibly less. This application is considered to be an exceptional case.

1.10 The applicant has indicated that 100 cars is the worse case scenario and is the maximum number of parking spaces that is likely to be required. This is largely because the applicant is unsure as to how many construction workers will require this facility, as some are likely to make their own way to the prison via public transport or by continuing to park in nearby roads. However, of those using the facility, it is envisaged that they would arrive at the application site via the A27 and Southerham and would then be transported by a shuttle bus to the prison. On the return journey to the site the intention would be to drive through the Cliffe Industrial Estate to the prison. However, the applicant has confirmed that if there are problems with rights of access into the industrial estate, the bus would drive back to the Beddingham roundabout via the A27 before returning towards Lewes. There is also another access (which is currently blocked off with earth) to the western side of the site, which could, if necessary be re-opened to gain direct access onto the east bound side of the road which approaches the Southerham roundabout from Lewes.

2. RELEVANT POLICIES

LDLP: – ST03 – Design, Form and Setting of Development

LDLP: – CT02 – Landscape Conservation and Enhancement

3. PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM STANDARD CONSULTEES

Highway Agency – No objection.

South Downs Joint Committee – No objection subject to conditions restricting the hours of use, illumination, and reinstatement of the site following the 12 month use.

Environment Agency – The application has a low environmental risk.

Main Town Or Parish Council – None received.

Natural England – No comments.

5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

5.1 Fifteen letters of objection have been received from the occupiers of nearby properties at Southerham, Friends of Lewes, Cycle Lewes, and the managing agents acting on behalf of the owners of the Cliffe Industrial Estate. Their concerns have been summarised as follows:

- any additional traffic would be unacceptable given the congestion on the A27 due to the highway improvements and the width restrictions imposed on the industrial estate.
- prejudicial to highway safety and the environmental character of a rural road due to increased traffic movements.
- the shuttle bus would have to leave the site to get to the prison via the Beddingham roundabout, as there is no shorter route if a way through the industrial estate is not possible.
- there is no justification for this private park and ride for the Prison. The additional traffic either along the by-pass or through the town should not be encouraged.
- additional traffic will cause a safety risk to families using the children's play facility (Monkey Business) on the Cliffe Industrial Estate.
- damage to the private road.
- the use of the access off the west side of the A26 also serves the application site and could be put into service with less impact and improved safety,
- any illumination of the site would compromise the landscape character of the AONB
- Southerham Lane is a cycle route and the proposed increase in traffic would conflict with that use
- increase in noise and disturbance from increased traffic.
- access cannot be gained via the Industrial Estate as the land is not part of the adopted highway and the applicants have no right of way over it.

5.2 Friends of Lewes

- the proposed parking for 100 cars and the subsequent movement of vehicles via Southerham Lane from the A27 would be prejudicial to highway safety and detrimental to the environmental character of the lane.
- the proposal of parking for 100 cars seems excessive and will result in traffic congestion in Lewes town centre and on the Lewes by-pass.

- the proposed location in relation to the Lewes Prison is not sustainable.

5.3 Cycle Lewes

- Vehicle access to the park and ride via Southerham Lane would be unsafe for cyclists

- A park and ride for Lewes Prison contractors in this particular location seems unlikely to reduce traffic movements through the town.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The main issues for consideration are; (1) whether the proposal would respect the distinctive qualities of the AONB under criteria (c) of Local Plan Policy CT2; (2) the impact on the character and amenities of the area through increased traffic levels, congestion or hazards, noise levels and other environmental considerations in relation to criteria (d) of Local Plan Policy ST3; and (3) impact on the amenities of nearby properties.

Landscape Area

6.2 The application site is open land situated beneath and adjacent to the Southerham roundabout on the A27. The perimeter of the site is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs. Given the lower levels and the screening of the site, it is considered that the parking of vehicles and siting of containers would not be unduly prominent from any public vantage points in the surrounding area.

6.3 The surface of the site is part concrete and soil. Should any resurfacing take place as a result of any permission, a condition could require future surfacing of the site as agreed with the planning authority, to conserve the landscape character of the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

6.4 The site is on the urban fringe of Lewes, close to the A27 and built development, but being in the AONB it would not normally be regarded as suitable for the proposed use. However, it is considered that the use of the site for a temporary period for parking purposes would be acceptable in landscape terms, if it is considered that clear over-riding benefits result elsewhere from the proposal in the form of providing an enhanced and upgraded prison and reducing parking problems in streets near the prison. It should be noted that a permanent use of the site for the proposed purposes would not be acceptable, as a permanent use would be incompatible with AONB policy.

Character and Amenities

6.5 The intention is to provide shuttle bus trips back and forth in the morning and then again at the end of the working day. While one journey each way is generally anticipated, this may on occasion fluctuate where an extra trip will

have to be made for staff needing to return to the car park during the day. A standard shuttle mini-bus would only seat up to around 16 passengers but the project manager has confirmed that every effort will be made to minimise the number of trips made by the bus. It is possible that a larger bus may be used if needed, dependent on the numbers of staff to be transported.

6.6 Given the volumes of traffic on the A27, it is not considered that the proposal would have any material effect on the character and amenities of that road. Also, given the volumes of traffic entering and leaving Lewes and within the town itself, it is not considered that the character and amenities of the town centre or approach roads would be unduly affected. A benefit arising from the proposal would be the reduction in pressure for parking on roads in the vicinity of the prison.

6.7 Neither the Highway Authority nor the Highways Agency have raised objection in terms of traffic generation or any additional traffic hazards which may result.

6.8 Taking the above into consideration the fact that the proposal is for a temporary permission for 12 months, it is not considered that the proposal would detrimentally affect the character and amenities of the area through increased traffic levels, noise levels and other environmental considerations.

Nearby Properties

6.9 There is a cluster of houses and other properties at nearby Southerham, including Southerham House, which is the nearest and is approximately 115 metres away from the access to the application site. Residents and staff of businesses in these properties have objected to the application. The road through Southerham is generally fairly quiet, but would be used to provide access to the application site off the A27. While it is clear that the frequency of passing traffic would noticeably increase, it is not considered that, in planning terms, this would occur to an unacceptable degree. Traffic would generally be limited to morning and evening peaks, with few movements during the day. Vehicles transporting materials from the storage containers on the site would generally be vans. It is considered that the impact on residential amenity arising from the proposal would be limited, particularly as the proposal would be for a limited time period only.

6.10 Overall, it is considered that this proposal is a 'one-off' which is founded in the specific circumstances of the prison during the temporary time period that important construction work is taking place. Acceptance of the proposal should not be regarded as a precedent for other such proposals which may come forward in this AONB location. In the circumstances, the proposal is considered to be acceptable. Conditions are recommended limiting the use to as temporary period of one year, and requiring details of lighting and surfacing to be agreed.

7. RECOMMENDATION

That permission be granted.

The application is subject to the following conditions:

1. The use hereby permitted shall be discontinued on or before 30 November 2008. The site shall thereafter be surfaced and landscaped in accordance with a scheme of work to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, within 6 months of cessation of the use.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain control over the land, having regard to Policies ST3 and CT2 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

2. Details of any external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before its installation. Such lighting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of both local and residential amenity having regard to Policies ST3 and CT2 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

3. The use hereby permitted shall not be open to visitors outside the following times; 06.30 to 19.00 Monday to Friday and 06.30 to 13.30 Saturdays, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority .

Reason: To protect residential amenities having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

This decision is based on the following submitted plans/documents:

<u>PLAN TYPE</u>	<u>DATE RECEIVED</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Block Plans	10 September 2007	060351/A/035A
Proposed Elevations	10 September 2007	060351/A/035A
Design & Access Statement	30 July 2007	
Location Plan	10 September 2007	060351/A/034B

Summary of reasons for decision and any relevant development plan policies/proposal:

It is considered that the proposal meets the aims and objectives of Local Plan Policy and respects the character of the location, complying with Policies ST3 and CT2 of the Lewes District Local Plan.