

Pre application enquiry

Change of use to visitor attraction farm, Land to east of Bridge Road and south of Bascombe Road, Churston

The site is designated in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 as Countryside Zone (Policy L4) and for new playing fields (Policy R3.3).

As the current use of the land is agricultural the proposed use would require the benefit of planning permission because it would constitute a change of use to a commercial business. There is a strict definition of agriculture in planning law that the proposal would not fall within. The proposed farm would be contrary to the designation of the site in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 and therefore any application would be treated as a departure from the plan.

As part of any planning application the loss of land for use as sports facilities would need to be addressed. An assessment would be needed of the current sports provision in Torbay, areas where there is a shortfall of facilities, the potential to improve these facilities and what the effect of losing the application site from sports use would be. It would be preferable for this to be agreed with Sport England prior to the progression of any planning application.

The principle of the proposed change of use would be assessed against Policy L4 in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011. It may be possible to make a case that the proposed use would be consistent with L4.4 in that it would constitute "tourist facilities, appropriate to the rural setting". It would be important that the scale and character of the proposed farm would respect the rural character of the area. For example low key buildings would be appropriate with an agricultural appearance.

The impact of traffic generated from the site would be a material consideration. It appears that the most straightforward way of addressing this would be for the park and ride site on Brixham Road to be used for parking. This would mean that traffic to the site would manoeuvre directly on and off the Brixham Road. Further advice on whether a traffic assessment would be needed in support of an application should be sought from the highway engineer. A green travel plan would be required for staff and visitor journeys. A sustainable transport contribution towards improving the park and ride facilities would be sought.

A key constraint in the Churston area is the use of the area by Horsehoe Bats for foraging. This means that an ecological survey would need to be submitted as part of any planning application. Advice on this should be sought from Natural England. It is likely that a year of surveys may be required to collect the appropriate data.

The above comments are made without prejudice to any subsequent decision.

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