



North Cray Residents Association

www.northcrayresidents.org.uk

TO: Mr Gareth Clegg, Development Management

FROM: Jean Gammons, Secretary

DATE: 12 January 2018

17/03050/FUL 139 North Cray Road : continued use of land for storage of motor vehicles in association with local car dealership

1. First, I wish to challenge a statement on the Application form which is untrue. In Section 15 the applicant states that there no trees or hedges on the proposed development site or on land adjacent to it that could influence the development or what might be important as part of the local landscape character. In fact there are trees bordering its boundary alongside the North Cray Road. These are of vital importance as part of the local landscape character.
2. As background, you will wish to note that when a member of the Enforcement team visited No. 139 in early December 2017 she was informed by the applicant that (a) the sale of used cars at that address had ceased and (b) all cars associated with that business had been removed. Checks we subsequently carried out on 10 January revealed that this was not the case and that the business (under two names, RJF Motors and J&L Motors) was still being carried on at No. 139, with its cars stored there. In the light of this information we have asked for Enforcement action to be taken forthwith.
3. When Enforcement made the above visit the applicant was informed that his other use of the site – the temporary storage of cars on behalf of an associated business – was also not permitted, and that the activity required planning permission or cessation. It is this that led to his current application for retrospective planning permission for a temporary change of use being submitted to you.
4. Returning now the Application form, we see that it states in Section 3 Description of the Proposal that the applicant states that the change of use of the land for the temporary storage of motor vehicles in association with a local car dealership had already started and that this change of use had been completed. The date given was 1 October 2017. We have no way of confirming whether or not this was the date upon which the site began to be used for the storage of vehicles associated with the Toyota/Lexus Dealership known as Jemca (see para 3.1 of the applicant's Planning, Design and Access Statement).
5. We see from the applicant's Planning, Design and Access Statement that the application is for retrospective planning permission for a temporary one year period. However, if you are minded to allow temporary retrospective planning permission in order to allow the applicant to avoid being subject to Enforcement action for the unauthorised activity described in paras. 3-4 above then the effective date for the end of this temporary permission should be no later than 1 March 2018.

6. If you do permit a continuation of this temporary use until 1 March, we ask you to make it a strict Condition that none of this site will be converted to hard standing. This is because we are anxious that nothing be allowed to be done on this land that could be seen as converting its status to "Previously developed land".

7. The applicant and Jemca have already enjoyed the unauthorised use of this sensitive Green Belt and Heritage Land for three months, and allowing retrospective temporary planning permission for a further period of up to 1 March would make a total of five months. This should be regarded as enough time for Jemca to resolve its problem as regards vehicle storage and should be regarded as sufficient help by Bexley council in sustaining the local economy. What is paramount here is, of course, planning policy which aims to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

8. If you allow this open storage of vehicles to continue beyond 1 March, then this would create a serious precedent. There are other holders of large plots of land in North Cray who would see this concession as something they, too, could benefit from. Similarly, this would signal to other commercial businesses in the area that they could also use Green Belt and Heritage Land for such a purpose, albeit on a temporary basis.

This is not speculation, it has already happened in North Cray on Green Belt sites bounded by the North Cray Road. One was the use of its land for the open storage of lorries by Stuarts Garden Centre (now Bexley Garden Centre) and the use of its land for the open storage of scaffolding by Manor Farm. These activities were made to cease by the Enforcement team.

Yours sincerely

Jean Gammons