

Form CAT01

Application for the transfer of a Council asset

Your details

Your Organisation Hillside Action Group

Contact name David Maude

Position held Member of Conigre Hill steering group

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Your proposal

Details of asset

Conigre Hill car park, Bradford on Avon, BA15 1NJ.
For location map, boundaries and access points please see maps in attached transfer plan, page 2.

Summary of proposal

Why do you want the asset and how will this benefit the local community?

Households on the hillside footpaths of Middle Rank, Tory and Wine Street Terrace have no direct vehicle access to their homes. We are highly dependent on the availability of nearby off-street parking spaces.

For the last half-century hillsiders and their visitors have usually been able to rely on Conigre Hill car park, a plot of spare land opposite Zion Baptist Church owned by Wiltshire Council. But spaces have of late come under increasing pressure.

This has added to concerns that – as has happened twice in the last few years – the site might again become vulnerable to redevelopment for housing. Hence this application.

We ask that ownership of the site be transferred to a Community Interest Company (CIC) controlled by the residents. This would help Wiltshire Council fulfil a key aim of its local transport plan – "to meet residents' needs for car parking near their homes" – while reducing its liabilities and potential future calls on council tax.

It would also be in line with current government and county council policy, to "make it easier for local people to take over amenities and keep them part of local life" and to "promote the transfer of assets it owns to community groups".

The hillside terraces are of economic benefit to Bradford on Avon; they help draw tourists to the town. To keep them that way requires both easy access and people – people who are prepared to live there and take care of their properties, usually on a budget.

We hope the Area Board will help us continue to do that, and feel able to support our application.

Community use

Please explain how the asset will be used

The site will be used as a car park for residents of Middle Rank, Tory, Tory Place, Wine Street Terrace and those at the lower end of Conigre Hill and the eastern end of Newtown without vehicle access to their homes. Provision will also be made for worshippers at Zion Baptist Church.

The parking scheme will be run by the CIC referred to in the summary above, with membership available on a per household basis regardless of occupants' gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or tenure (i.e. freeholders, private tenants or tenants of Selwood Housing).

For further details, please see Sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 of the attached transfer plan (pp 6 & 7).

Suitability for purpose

Please explain why this asset is suitable for the intended purpose

When bought by the then Urban District Council in 1959, the car park was seen as a vital resource for residents. The council clerk said it was "essential to have some vehicular access to the hillside area as otherwise it will not attract people to live there". That remains true today. Our surveys suggest around 30 households regularly use it as their main vehicle access point and parking facility.

Community support and consultation

Please set out who you have consulted about your proposal and how you have addressed any concerns raised

We have gone through two rounds of consultation with all residents who regularly use the car park and, we believe, most of those who occasionally do. We set up a website and online survey, provided a dedicated email address and phone number, and held an open house at Zion Baptist Church. The response has been overwhelmingly in favour.

Some concerns have been expressed about affordability, the precise usage rules, enforcement and the possible knock-on effect on other nearby parking areas. We have tried to address these issues in two leaflet distributions, Q&A sections of the website and via personal contacts and emails.

Legal issues

Please set out how you will address any legal, planning, insurance and health and safety matters associated with the asset

Please see Sections 1.2 & 4 of our transfer plan. We have taken informal advice from a practising lawyer member of HAG, consulted the government-funded Asset Transfer Unity, and been in contact with a Wolverhampton community group that runs a successful paid-for car park.

Financial matters

How will you fund future running costs, repairs and maintenance?

We believe our proposed method of financing a transfer, and maintaining the car park in future - in essence, a household contribution to the CIC of £3 a week - to be both reasonable and realistic.

Future management

How will you manage the asset and ensure that it continues to contribute to the wellbeing of the local community in the future?

Please see Section 3.3.3 of our transfer plan.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the details included in this application are correct

Signed:



Name (please print): David Maude

Date: 16 July 2012