

Vision Group for Sidmouth

Objection to application to use Trustee Land at the Ham, Sidmouth

11 June 2023



Ms Norton of Vanillibean applied on 6 June for permission for “temporary seasonal sales of refreshments from a small vehicle during summer 2023,” - with the focus on the summer holidays: <https://sidmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Agenda-TRST-120623.pdf>

The Vision Group for Sidmouth objects to the application to use Trustee Land at the Ham – and addresses the 'additional information' where further supporting evidence is provided

1. 'Families' can 'enjoy the space as much as possible' by walking from the several ice-cream and refreshment outlets on the eastern part of town; they can 'bring refreshments during their playtime on the green' from a mere hundred meters away.
2. Not only is the provision of further high-sugar content refreshments not necessary, but this would entail unfair competition as regards the businesses who are already struggling to pay rates; this was the main objection raised as part of the recent rejection by the STC of the EDDC recommendation to extend street trading.
3. The 'eco' credentials of this business are not convincing: the tuktuk is not an EV; any high-sugar food is not 'eco-friendly'; 'organic'/'vegan' sweets are still sweets.
4. The application is made as an 'event' – which is commonly understood to be a one-off occurrence, rather than a daily presence; the application form to use Trustee Land allows for the use of the Ham for specific 'events' only and not an ongoing business presence.
5. This application could well 'open up the floodgates to other potential traders'; it is not clear why granting permission for this business to operate on the Ham will not encourage others to do so by creating a precedence.
6. In fact, the contradiction at the heart of this application makes the plea on the one hand that this 'would be that of a temporary situation' – and yet on the other that this 'would simply be a trial to see the potential of any future business on the site'; the application cannot be both 'temporary' and 'a trial'. Either this is granted as a unique event and no other similar application is to be 'ever' considered; or it is being brought forward to test how the Ham might be used for other businesses.
7. The applicant refers to how this application might help 'regenerate the area', and yet a temporary ice-cream stall does not amount to 'regeneration'; rather, the STC has not only invested in the regeneration of the Ham (with the financial support of current projects), but it is looking forward to the setting up of the Rockfish restaurant in the former Drill Hall.
8. Throughout the consideration of how to regenerate the Eastern Town, the STC – and in particular the Trustees – has shown great sensitivity with regard to the status of the Ham. This application contravenes the the Ham Covenant in that it is clearly primarily “*a place of recreation*” <https://drillhall.historic-sidmouth.uk/eastern-town/the-ham/ham-conveyance-march-1896> – and as such should be rejected.

As a final comment, the Vanillibean business and its tuktuk are clearly a welcome part of the Sidmouth business environment: its regular appearance at various Kennaway House events adds to the colour and charm of the place; the success of a business run by a young entrepreneur is also to be welcomed; and the Sid Valley clearly wishes to be seen as a business-friendly area.

The Ham, however, is not the place to encourage such unique vibrant businesses; in conclusion, therefore, the VGS would wish Ms Norton and Vanillibean continued success, but would urge the Trustees to reject this application.

Made on behalf of the Vision Group for Sidmouth

Jeremy Woodward, secretary VGS