

SCHEDULE A: Applications with Recommendation

18/0702

Item No: 11

Date of Committee: 23/11/2018

Appn Ref No:
18/0702

Applicant:
Mrs Brown

Parish:
Stanwix Rural

Agent:

Ward:
Stanwix Rural

Location: Green Acres, High Knells, Houghton, Carlisle, CA6 4JW

Proposal: Change Of Use From Agricultural Land To Provide Additional Land For Existing Caravan Storage Compound

Date of Receipt:
03/08/2018

Statutory Expiry Date
28/09/2018

26 Week Determination
26/11/2018

REPORT

Case Officer: Barbara Percival

ADDENDUM

This application was deferred by Members of the Development Control Committee at the last meeting in order to undertake a site visit.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 It is recommended that this application is approved with conditions.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Principle of development
- 2.2 Impact of the proposal on landscape character
- 2.3 Whether the scale and design of the proposal is acceptable
- 2.4 Impact of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring residents
- 2.5 Whether the proposed methods for the protection of the environment are acceptable
- 2.6 Impact of the proposal on highway safety
- 2.7 Impact of the proposal on biodiversity
- 2.8 Other matters

3. Application Details

The Site

- 3.1 The application site is located to the north and east respectively of an existing caravan storage compound and touring caravan site at Green Acres, High Knells, Houghton.

The Proposal

- 3.2 The proposal seeks full planning permission for the change of use of agricultural land to provide additional land for an existing caravan storage compound.
- 3.3 The land, equating to 0.213 hectares, is the north west corner of an agricultural field located immediately adjacent to an existing caravan storage compound and touring caravan site. The submitted details illustrate that a new native hedgerow would be planted along the northern and southern boundaries of the application site. Vehicular access to the proposed extended storage compound would be via the existing access serving Green Acres.

4. Summary of Representations

- 4.1 This application has been advertised by the posting of a Site Notice. No verbal or written representations have been made during the consultation period.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Cumbria County Council - (Highways & Lead Local Flood Authority): - no objections;

Stanwix Rural Parish Council: - the application site has a long planning history. The most recent application in 15/0574 for proposed combined use of existing agricultural stackyard to provide overspill for adjoining caravan storage area for up to 45no. caravans; addition of 5no. hardstanding caravan pitches for seasonal use from March 1st to October 31st on land currently designated for this use. The City Council's website appears not to record any caravan site licences, therefore, the parish council as unaware as to the current existing permitted total of seasonal and storage pitches. The photographic site plan accompanying the current application appears to show approximately 75 units on site.

The landscape character is one of open fields bounded by agricultural hedgerows. Photographs of the site show hedges forming the site boundary to be trimmed and maintained to a height which fails to screen the existing parked caravans from the surrounding countryside. The applicants covering letter states that the proposed change of use is to accommodate larger, longer caravans, the visibility of these within the landscape can only be conjectured. The parish council is therefore concerned that should this application be permitted the continued expansion of the site would be

sufficient to result in the final creation of an unacceptable visual intrusion into open countryside that would be out of scale and character within the setting of the rural landscape. The parish council therefore objects to the application and recommends refusal. Should consent be granted; however, the parish council would then urge conditioning to require interception measures to prevent ground, or groundwater contamination arising through accidental leaks or spillages;

Cumbria Constabulary - North Area Community Safety Unit (formerly Crime Prevention): - no observations or comments to offer in respect of this application;

Environmental Health Section:- the storage areas are not a concern for Environmental Health as this does not affect any human habitation and would be a planning matter, nor would it affect the site licence as they are not used for habitation whilst in storage. The site licence was amended 13th January 2016 to show for amended planning permissions 15/0872. The current licence allows for the total number of occupied touring caravans on the site at any time not to exceed 35. The caravans shall not be occupied as permanent accommodation; in addition, up to 5 tents may also be pitched on site. There is no requirement for the licence to be displayed on the council's web site, it only needs to be displayed on site or available on request. Sites shown on the council's website are the site rules for sites that have residential status and fall under the Mobile Home Act 2013, Green Acres does not and is governed by Caravan Control and Development Act 1960.

6. Officer's Report

Assessment

- 6.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990/Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that an application for planning permission is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The relevant planning policies against which the application is required to be assessed is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and Policies SP2, SP6, EC9, EC10, EC11, IP6, CC5, CM4, CM5, GI1, GI3 and GI6 of the Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030. The City Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Trees and Development' is also material planning consideration. The Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit (March 2001) is a further material consideration.
- 6.3 The proposal raises the following planning issues:

1. Principle of Development

- 6.4 Whilst the preferred location for new development will be in existing settlements, changes in agriculture over recent decades have resulted in a decline in farm-related jobs. As a result there is now a need to strengthen the

economy in rural areas by supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF recognises this by stating that: *"planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development"*.

- 6.5 In order to achieve this aim, paragraph 83 goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should enable: *"a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship"*.
- 6.6 Paragraph 84 highlights that: *"sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist"*.
- 6.7 The aforementioned paragraphs of the NPPF are reiterated in Policies EC9, EC10 and EC11 of the local plan all of which seek to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments where they respect the character of the countryside and where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural services centres. Specifically in relation to caravan, camping and chalet sites, Policy EC10 of the local plan highlights that proposals for the development of and extension to of sites will be supported subject to compliance with the criteria identified within the policy.
- 6.8 The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of agricultural land to extend an existing caravan storage compound at Green Acres, High Knells, Houghton. The submitted documents highlighting that:
- there has been a caravan storage compound at Green Acres for a number of years
 - the closure of several storage facilities within the area has lead to a demand in caravan owners seeking alternative storage facilities
 - modern touring caravans now have fixed beds resulting in longer units
 - the larger caravans require wider storage spaces and more space to manoeuvre when hitching up and dropping off the vans
 - some of the owners who currently store their caravans at Green Acres

live outside the county but then site them on the adjoining caravan site when visiting the county

- tourism brings additional benefits to the local economy
- do not envisage any significant increase in vehicular traffic movements
- the existing boundary hedges around the existing caravan storage area are over three metres high and the usual height of a caravan is 2.3 metres in height, therefore, are well screened from the surrounding countryside
- the proposed boundary hedge around the enlarged storage area would match the existing boundary hedgerows
- the existing hedge line along the southern and western boundaries would only be removed once new hedge line provides adequate screening
- prior to entering the storage area., waste from chemical toilets and waste water will have been emptied into the appropriate disposal points within the caravan park or elsewhere prior to travelling
- no washing of caravans is allowed within the storage compound

- 6.9 Stanwix Rural Parish Council recommends refusal of the application citing the continued expansion of the caravan site and storage compound would result in an unacceptable visual intrusion into open countryside, out of character with the setting of the rural landscape. The views of the parish council are noted; however, the proposal would be an expansion of an existing sustainable rural tourism business. Justification has been provided as to the requirement of the additional storage compound; the application site is well related to the existing caravan site and storage compound with additional landscaping proposed to minimise any perceived visual impact; adequate access/parking provision can also be achieved; and the application site is not located within a flood risk area. Accordingly, the proposal accords with the objectives of the NPPF and relevant local plan policies.

2. Impact Of Proposal On Landscape Character

- 6.10 The Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit (March 2001) (CLCGT) describes the character of different landscape types across the county and provides guidance to help maintain their distinctiveness. The CLCGT identifies that the application site falls within the Cumbria Landscape Character Sub-Type 5b "Low Farmland". The toolkit advises that key characteristics of this landscape are: undulating and rolling topography; intensely farmed agricultural pasture; hedges, hedgerow trees; and fences bound fields and criss cross up and over the rolling landscape.
- 6.11 The supporting guidance in respect of access and recreational development outlines that: *"small scale sensitive farm based tourism/recreational businesses should be well sited close to or within existing farm buildings and appropriate landscaping should be included to integrate new facilities into the landscape"*. In such a context, the application site would be screened from public viewpoints by existing and proposed hedgerows and viewed against the backdrop of several large agricultural type buildings which would also mitigate for any perceived visual impact. A condition is also recommended that would ensure that the proposed hedgerows along the northern and eastern boundaries are maintained at a height of 3 metres when measured

from the existing ground level. Accordingly, the proposal is unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact on the character of the area.

3. Whether The Scale and Design Of The Proposal Is Acceptable

- 6.12 As highlighted earlier in the report, the proposal seeks full planning permission for the change of use of agricultural land to provide additional land for an extension to an existing caravan storage compound. The application site, equating to approximately 0.213 hectares, forms the south west corner of a large agricultural field immediately adjacent to the existing caravan site and caravan storage compound.
- 6.13 The submitted details highlighting that a new boundary hedgerow would be planted around the application site to mirror that of the existing hedgerows around the existing caravan site and storage compound which are maintained at a height of 3 metres. The height of a caravan is approximately 2.3 metres, therefore, once established the hedgerows would help to screen the application site from public viewpoints.
- 6.14 In overall terms, the scale of the proposal is acceptable with any perceived visual impact mitigated by the planting of a hedgerow. Furthermore, the compound would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing caravan park, storage compound and large agricultural type buildings. Accordingly, the proposal would not form a discordant feature within the landscape.

4. Impact Of The Proposal On The Living Conditions Of Neighbouring Residents

- 6.15 The nearest residential property, Cavalaire (annotated as Viewlands on the OS map), is located approximately 212 metres and 270 metres south east from the application site and the caravan site respectively. Given the existing use of the site and the distance from the development, the proposal would not have a significant impact on the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties through intensification of use or unacceptable noise and disturbance.

5. Whether The Proposed Methods For The Protection Of The Environment Are Acceptable

- 6.16 A further issue raised by the parish council was the potential contamination of ground and ground waters through contamination arising from accidental spillages. The applicant has provided additional information to address the concerns of the parish council. These detail that the additional storage compound would follow the same procedures in place for the existing storage compound. Prior to entering the compound the chemical toilets and waste water from the caravans would have been emptied as it is common practice not to travel carrying water or chemical water within the units. Furthermore, there will be no washing of caravans within the storage compound. The concerns of the parish council are noted; however, given the existing procedures in operation for the disposal of chemicals and waste water from the caravans it is unlikely that the proposal would have a detrimental impact

through potential contamination of existing ground or ground waters.

6. Impact Of The Proposal On Highway Safety

- 6.17 Policies EC10 and EC11 of the local plan seek to ensure that development proposals should normally be accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. However; for some developments in the rural area this may not be possible. In these cases new development should be able to demonstrate that adequate access/parking is available and that proposals do not lead to an increase in traffic levels beyond the capacity of the surrounding local highway network.
- 6.18 Cumbria County Council, as Highways Authority, has been consulted and raise no objections as the proposal will not have a material effect on existing highway conditions.

7. Impact Of The Proposal On Biodiversity

- 6.19 The Council's GIS Layer has identified that there is the potential for several key species to be present within the vicinity. Using the guidance issued by Natural England, the development it is unlikely that the proposed development would not harm protected species or their habitat. To further protect biodiversity and breeding birds, informatics are recommended within the decision notice drawing the applicant's attention to the requirement under conservation legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 etc.

8. Other Matters

- 6.20 The parish council in its response comments that the city council's website does not record any caravan site licences, or any amendments thereof. The city council's Environmental Health Division has confirmed that there is no requirement for the licence to be displayed on the council's web site, it only needs to be displayed on site or available on request. Those caravan sites published on the council's website are the site rules for sites that have residential status and fall under the Mobile Home Act 2013. Green Acres is governed by separate legislation i.e. Caravan Control and Development Act 1960.
- 6.21 By way of background, the site licence for Green Acres was amended in January 2016 following the granting of planning permission for the proposed combined use of existing agricultural stackyard to provide overspill for adjoining caravan storage area for up to 45no. caravans; addition of 5no. hardstanding caravan pitches for seasonal use from March 1st to October 31st on land currently designated for this use (application reference 15/0872). The current site licence allows for the total number of occupied touring caravans on the site at any time not to exceed 35. The caravans shall not be occupied as permanent accommodation; in addition, up to 5 tents may also be pitched on site.

Conclusion

6.22 In overall terms, the principle of development is acceptable. The location, scale and design of the development is appropriate to the character of the area with adequate access/parking achievable and would not lead to an increase in traffic levels beyond the capacity of the surrounding local highway network. Any perceived visual impact from public viewpoints would be mitigated through the planting of native hedgerows to mirror the existing hedgerows surrounding the site. Given the scale and orientation of the development in relation to neighbouring properties it is unlikely that the development would have a significant detrimental impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of those properties through intensification of use or unacceptable noise and disturbance. Accordingly, the proposals accord with the objectives of the NPPF, PPG and relevant local plan policies.

6.22 The application is, therefore, recommended for approval.

7. Planning History

7.1 In 1996, full planning permission was granted for change of use of part field no. 6757 to form caravan site and new access from highway and track through edge of field no. 7544 (application reference 96/0121).

7.2 In 1997, full planning permission was granted for change of use of field no: 7458 and adjoining hard standing for storage of touring caravans (application reference 97/0340).

7.3 In 1999, full planning permission was granted for variation of condition no.8 of approval 96/0121 to allow caravans to remain on the site for up to 28 consecutive days (application reference 99/0699).

7.4 In 2000, outline planning permission was granted for erection of wardens dwelling and office (application reference 99/0698).

7.5 Also in 2000, full planning permission was granted for extension of existing caravan storage area and formation of overspill caravan site for additional 12 pitches (application reference 99/0967).

7.6 Again in 2000, reserved matters approval was granted for erection of wardens bungalow and office (application reference 22/0210).

7.7 In 2003, full planning permission was granted for provision of 12 pitches to allow caravans to be sited for seasonal use, from 1st March to 31st October on land currently designated for overspill use (application reference 03/0574).

7.8 In 2015, full planning permission was granted for proposed combined use of existing agricultural stackyard to provide overspill for adjoining caravan storage area for up to 45no. caravans; addition of 5no. hardstanding caravan pitches for seasonal use from March 1st to October 31st on land currently designated for this use (application reference 15/0872).

8. Recommendation: Grant Permission

1. The development shall be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development shall be undertaken in strict accordance with the approved documents for this Planning Permission which comprise:

1. the submitted planning application form received 30th July 2018;
2. the site location plan received 3rd August 2018 (Reference No. 1);
3. the aerial photograph received 30th July 2018 (Reference No. 2);
4. the highways details received 30th July 2018 (Reference No. 3);
5. the supporting details received 30th July 2018 (Reference No. 4);
6. the Notice of Decision; and
7. any such variation as may subsequently be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To define the permission.

3. All planting comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the storage compound or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and maintained thereafter to the satisfaction of the council; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure that a satisfactory landscaping scheme is implemented and that it fulfils the objectives of Policy GI6 of the Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030.

4. The proposed hedgerows to be planted along the northern and eastern boundaries shall be maintained at a height of not less than 3 metres as measured from the existing ground level.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy GI1 of the Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030.

Reference No 1

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LEGEND

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Limit of land being farmed:

hedge: 

stone wall: 

rows of trees: 

bridleway: 

Name: W A BROWN

Signature: A Brown

Date: 25/4/95

Holding No. 08.1083.0079

All measurements in hectares.

archaeological feature: 

Ponds: 

Vernacular building: 

example of part field: *2456pt A

Field No's Taken from 1:2500 O.S. sheets

Scale 1:2500

25m 0m 25m 50m 75m 100m

Based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map O.S. Licence No ES75529X

Reference No 2

EXISTING HEDGE TO BE REMOVED
WHEN NEW HEDGE PROVIDES
ADEQUATE SCREENING

PROPOSED
STORAGE
EXTENTION

PROPOSED NEW HEDGE LINE
MATCHING EXISTING HEDGE

PROPOSED NEW HEDGE LINE

