

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee: East Area
Date: 5 February 2009
Ward: Heworth Without
Parish: Heworth Without Parish Council

Reference: 08/02729/FUL
Application at: Caravan Site Stockton Lane York YO32 9UA
For: Use of land for the stationing of 20 additional touring caravans
By: Mr Andrew Wilson
Application Type: Full Application
Target Date: 4 February 2009

1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 Permission is sought for the use of 0.7 ha of land (1.04 ha including the access road) for the stationing of 20 touring caravans. The proposal would form an extension of an existing caravan site granted for 20 pitches in June 2005.

1.2 The site is located on the north side of Stockton Lane, from which access would be taken. The existing caravan site is located to the west of the application site and utilises the same access as that proposed for the application site. The existing utility block at the site is to serve the proposed and existing development. To the front of the site are a number of residential properties some of which are used as holiday lets. To the west of the site beyond the existing caravans site is the residential curtilage of Orchard House and to the east is open farmland. The north of the site is bounded by Old Foss Beck.

1.3 The proposal will include the formation of 20 hardstandings, which will be formed by laying down crushed stone and seeding over, and the planting of landscaping to provide sub-division between each plot.

1.4 The application is supported by a design and access statement, which concludes that the development will provide agricultural diversification beneficial to the farm enterprise and the rural economy. The proposals will provide for visitors coming to the area and the site is sustainably located close to the city and is proving exceptionally popular.

Site History

1.5 03/03529/OUT Touring Caravan site for 135 pitches on 3.9ha of land WITHDRAWN following concerns over the effect of the development on the Green Belt and on drainage/flood risk issues

1.6 04/03206/OUT Touring caravan site and ancillary outbuilding & 04/012888/FUL Conversion of agricultural building to caravan storage and rebuilding a former dwelling as a security/reception building. These two were WITHDRAWN from Main Planning Committee agenda in October 2005 following concerns over the effect of

the development on the Green Belt, the amount of landscaping required to screen the development, lack of information on foul drainage.

1.7 05/01395/FUL Touring caravan site for 20 pitches and the use of existing buildings for the storage of caravans was granted in 2005

1.8 07/02755/FUL Provision of 20 hardstandings for the 20 pitches approved in 2005 was granted in January 2008

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

City Boundary : York City Boundary 0001

DC Area Teams : East Area (1) 0003

2.2 Policies:

CYV5

Caravan and camping sites

CYV1

Criteria for visitor related devt

CYGB1

Development within the Green Belt

3.0 CONSULTATIONS

INTERNAL

3.1 Highways Network Management - It is noted that the proposal would double the size of the site with potentially similar increases of traffic movement into/out of the site. The existing access is not laid out such that car and caravan units can simultaneously pass at the entrance and these units cannot turn left into or out of the site without crossing to the opposite side of the road. It is recommended that the access be reformed with effective kerb radii of 9 metres and a drive width of 5.5m for 15 metres into the site. Conditions are recommended to ensure the access is formed to the standard required.

3.2 Countryside Officer - The location of the proposed beck is not a significant problem from a nature conservation point of view. However there are water voles in Old Foss Beck. Whilst the proposal is unlikely to affect the water voles it will be necessary to ensure that the bank side habitat is protected and enhanced for it's wildlife interest.

3.3 Environmental Protection - No objections to the application however an informative is requested to ensure that the developers are aware of the relevant legislation governing their activities.

EXTERNAL

3.4 Heworth Without - The Parish Council object to the application for the following reasons:-

3.5 The proposal would significantly enlarge the current area occupied by caravans thereby encroaching on an open Green Belt.

3.6 The development is considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt as the size, scale and location of the proposed extension, together with the activities associated with it would harm the openness of the Green Belt and be a detriment to the visual amenity and the attractive rural character of the area.

3.7 The development due to the lack of local shops is not considered convenient for the use of public transport, and therefore is likely to increase the number of vehicular journeys undertaken by visitors to the site by private cars.

3.8 It is considered the development would harm the visual amenity and outlook from Stockton Lane by virtue of the proposed site encroaching into the field up to the Eastern Tree Belt, and becoming a dominant feature.

3.9 Environment Agency - Object to the application in the absence of any evidence to demonstrate that the flood risk sequential test has been applied. The flood risk assessment (FRA) has been carried out as if the entire site is flood zone 2 however much of the site is in flood zone 3. The Agency is only satisfied with the FRA if all the caravans are positioned in the portion of the site that is flood zone 2.

3.10 Nineteen Letters of support have been received covering the following points:-

- The extra pitches will bring further tourist money into the York area
- The caravan park will help with jobs in local pubs and establishments
- Living next door to the caravan site is hardly noticed
- Supporters use the site a lot and enjoy the very high standards of the site
- Increase in the number of pitches will enable more people to enjoy the City of York and surrounding area
- This scheme will help keep tourist traffic out of the city, there is a convenient bus stop adjacent to the site
- Revenue will be put into the local community
- Site is conveniently located
- Farmers are being encouraged to diversify
- Local Authorities should be supporting tourism
- The applicant has always acted for the good of wildlife
- The applicant has planted a lot of trees making the site very pleasant
- The bus stop outside the site makes it very accessible
- A lot of the sites in the York area are allowed to open all year round

3.11 One letter of objection has been received covering the following points:-

- The original site opened two years ago is clearly visible from the surrounding areas of Stockton Lane because it is inadequately screened
- The current site is very intrusive in the green belt
- There is no screening at the entrance to the site, caravans are clearly visible and occupants can be seen walking around the site
- The caravans can also be seen from the A64 between Hopgrove and York across Monk Stray.
- The approval of an extension would cause future problems for refusing planning applications on the site. On this site there is already caravan storage, holiday cottages and caravans.
- Stockton Lane enhances the approach to York and the entrance to Stockton Village
- The bus stop is currently positioned badly for access to the caravan site on what is a very dangerous road for pedestrians. The bus stop should be repositioned

PUBLICITY

3.12 The application was advertised by means of a site notice displayed on site on the 6th January 2009. The nearest properties have also notified.

4.0 APPRAISAL

4.1 Key Issues:-

- Policy background
- Impact on openness of the green belt
- Flood risk and drainage
- Highways issues
- Sustainability
- Tourism

4.2 The following national planning advice in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS) are considered of most relevance to this application:-

4.3 PPS1: "Delivering Sustainable Development" - promotes sustainable development as well as mixed use development, offers guidance on the operation of the plan led system and considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications.

4.4 PPG2: "Green Belts" identifies the purposes and uses of land within the Green Belt, and states that their most important attribute is their openness. In relation to the change of use of land, this is inappropriate unless it maintains openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development, will not exist unless the harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

4.5 PPS7: "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" identifies the planning system as having an important role in supporting and facilitating development and land uses in helping to maintain and manage the countryside. It also advises of the importance of protecting the quality and character of the countryside, and supports re-use of buildings in particular for economic purposes. It is also supportive of farm diversification. In relation to farm diversification in the Green Belt, it states, where relevant, favourable consideration should be given as long as the development maintains openness. The wider benefits of a proposal are capable of constituting very special circumstances.

4.6 In relation to touring caravan parks, it provides particular advice. Authorities should balance the need to provide facilities with the need to protect landscapes and scope for relocating sites away from flooding, and to ensure new sites are not prominent, and visual intrusion is minimised by screening.

4.7 PPG13: Transport seeks to promote more sustainable transport choices for people, and to promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling, and seeks to reduce the need to travel, especially by car in new developments.

4.8 PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control gives guidance on the relevance of pollution controls to the exercise of planning functions, including light pollution and contamination.

4.9 PPS25: Development and Flood Risk sets out the importance the Government attaches to management and reduction of flood risk in the planning process.

4.10 Relevant City of York Draft Local Plan (incorporating the Fourth Set of changes) (April 2005) include GB1, GP1, V1 and V5. GB1 reflects advice within PPG2. Policy GP1 'Design' includes the expectation that development proposals will, inter alia; respect or enhance the local environment; ensure residents living nearby are not unduly affected by noise, disturbance, overlooking, overshadowing or dominated by overbearing structures, use materials appropriate to the area; avoid the loss of open spaces or other features that contribute to the landscape and incorporate appropriate landscaping.

4.11 Policy V1 says that visitor related development will be encouraged. In determining applications account will be taken of whether the proposal has made adequate servicing arrangements, is accessible to public transport routes, will result in increased traffic, is likely to improve the prosperity of the tourism industry and the city's economy, will adversely impact on the reasonable use and enjoyment of adjacent buildings and land or adversely impact on the countryside setting of the city.

4.12 Policy V5 relates specifically to touring caravan/camping sites and sets out criteria for assessing proposals. The policy specifies that the number of pitches should not exceed 20, and that there should be no pitches for static caravans. In addition, the proposal should not involve the erection of permanently sited ancillary buildings other than toilets/washrooms and a site office, the site should be associated with an existing settlement and of a compatible scale to the settlement, and should be readily accessible by public transport. Further criteria within the policy

are that the proposal has no adverse effect on the openness of greenbelt, it provides a direct benefit to the local residential workforce, the approach roads are of a suitable standard to accommodate caravans, there is no adverse effect on the provision of local services, the proposal is complementary to recreational opportunities in the vicinity and it provides a direct benefit to the local residential rural community.

4.13 The Good Practice Guide for Planning and Tourism replaced PPG21 in 2006. The guide reiterates much of the advice in PPS7 with regard to planning policy. The guidance says Local Planning Authorities should carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites. They should examine the scope for relocating any existing visually or environmentally intrusive parks away from sensitive areas, or for re-location away from sites prone to flooding or coastal erosion.

The key issues are:

Impact on the openness of Green Belt

4.14 The approved application for the existing 20 pitch caravan site was a reduced scheme approved following the withdrawal of an earlier application. The site was reduced in size from 2.4Ha to 1.9 ha so that the caravans were contained within field boundaries and to some extent could be obscured by existing buildings. At the time of the consideration of that application the reduction in site area was considered to significantly reduce the impact of the development on the openness of Green Belt.

4.15 The application now submitted is to extend the caravan site into the area north east of the existing camp site. Policy V5 of the Draft Local Plan relates specifically to touring caravan/camping sites and sets out criteria for assessing proposals of this nature. The policy specifies that the number of pitches should not exceed 20; the text to the policy confirms that this includes existing pitches together with any extensions. The proposal, which would result in the increase of the site to 40 pitches in total, would undermine the basis of this policy which is to permit small-scale sites which whilst benefiting the tourism industry do not overpower existing settlements or become visually prominent in the Green Belt/open countryside.

4.16 A further requirement of Policy V5 is that proposals of this type should not adversely affect the openness of Green Belt. The site is located in a relatively open and undeveloped area which is agricultural in its appearance. The north-east boundary of the site has been well planted and although these trees are not yet mature and most were not in leaf when the site was inspected it is apparent that they would afford some visual protection for the caravans in the summer months. Furthermore hedges adjacent to the roads surrounding the site are mature and have been allowed to grow and again in summer would provide some visual protection for the site. Notwithstanding the new planting and existing hedging, it is considered that the extension of the site will still be prominent in the landscape, and the contrast of the white caravans against the countryside backdrop will be clearly visible particularly early and late in the season. Furthermore the entrance to the site is relatively open and there are views into the application site. Officers consider from this vantage point the caravans will be visually significant in the landscape. The

implementation of the access improvements required by Highways Network Management would further open up views from the front of the site.

4.17 As PPG2 states that material changes of use are inappropriate unless they preserve openness, it is considered that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green belt. In these circumstances it is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. The applicant's agent within his design and access statement concludes that the proposals will enhance diversification of the farm, will benefit the local economy and will better meet the needs of visitors. These statements are not backed up by any quantitative information relating to the farm enterprise or the wider economy and are therefore difficult to consider as very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

4.18 In relation to Draft Policy V5, the justification text to the policy considers that small scale proposals for touring caravans 'are unlikely to compromise Green Belt objectives and may be acceptable' subject to meeting the criteria of the policy. However the text also says that ' Ideally caravans sites should be located in well wooded areas... the essential screening of sites should consist of already well established tree cover and any new planting should only be necessary to reinforce existing cover'. Given the open nature of the area around the site the level of existing planting and the openness of the frontage of the site it is not considered that sufficient screening exists to make the proposal acceptable. Furthermore policy V1 of the Local Plan states that in determining applications for visitor related development account will be taken of whether the proposal adversely impacts on the countryside setting of the City. Officers consider that such adverse impacts would be likely to be caused for the reasons stated above.

Flood Risk and Drainage

4.19 PPS25 entitled 'Development and Flood Risk' (PPS25) advises a sequential risk based approach to determining the suitability of land for development in flood risk areas is central to the Policy Statement and should be applied at all levels of the planning process. Annex D of the statement says that the overall aim of decision makers should be to steer new development to flood Zone 1. Where there is no reasonably available sites in flood Zone 1 account should be taken of the flood risk vulnerability of land uses and consider reasonably available sites in flood zone 2. The application site is located partly within flood zone 2 and partly within flood zone 3. The flood risk assessment fails to acknowledge that the site is partly within flood zone 3. PPS25 classes short-let caravan pitches as 'more vulnerable' uses. The Environment Agency objects to the application on the basis that PPS25 requires decision makers to steer new development to areas at the lowest probability of flooding by applying a 'sequential test'. The applicant has provided very limited evidence that the site is sequentially preferable, the argument being that the site is part of an established business and therefore has to be located as proposed. In officers opinion the information submitted is insufficient to show that there are no other sites in the locality or wider area that could fulfil the need for touring caravans that are not within flood zone 3. In the absence of an adequate sequential test being submitted the application cannot be supported.

Highways Issues

4.20 Highways Network Management are satisfied that the proposals can be supported subject to the access being improved so that cars pulling caravans can enter and leave the site without having to cross to the other side of Stockton lane to enter the site. Conditions are recommended to ensure the improvements to the radii of kerbs and to widen the entrance to 5.5 metres.

Sustainability

4.21 The applicant contends that the site is sustainably located given the position of a bus stop outside the site and the frequent bus service both in to York and further a field. However officers consider that the site is less sustainable when considering either walking or cycling given the nature of Stockton Lane adjacent to the site. Along Stockton Lane the speed limit is 60, there are no footpaths and the road is relatively narrow, this makes cycling and walking from the site difficult and in officers view potentially dangerous. Furthermore the lack of suitable walking and cycling facilities from the site to the Stockton-on-the-Forest is likely to mean that accessing any services within the village is unlikely unless by car. However, on balance, given the existence of a caravan site granted when the circumstances around the site were similar in 2005, officers do not consider that there is sufficient basis to refuse the application on sustainability grounds. However, this deficiency adds to officer concerns regarding the proposal.

Tourism

4.22 Whilst undoubtedly the letters of support show that this site is well liked by visitors the Good Practice Guide for Planning and Tourism indicates that such development should be steered away from sites vulnerable to flooding or which are considered to be visually intrusive.

4.23 The applicant whilst indicating that the site will bring benefits to the existing farming enterprise and the wider economy has provided no quantitative evidence of this that would outweigh the harm officers have identified above.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The proposal is considered to adversely impact on the openness of Green Belt. PPG2 states that material changes of use are inappropriate unless they preserve openness, it is considered that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. No very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh harm to the Green Belt have been put forward by the applicant.

5.2 The application site is, in part, located in flood zone 3. The applicant has failed to provide sufficient evidence to meet the sequential test set out in Annex D of PPS25 and in the absence of sufficient information to show that the site is "sequentially preferable" the proposal conflicts with advice in PPS25 "Development and Flood Risk", PPS7 "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" and the Good Practice Guide for Tourism and Planning 2006

COMMITTEE TO VISIT

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

1 The site is located within an area of Green Belt which is characterised by its generally agricultural appearance. The extension of the touring caravan site would compromise the openness of this area and would conflict with the purposes for including land within Green Belt. The proposal is therefore inappropriate development in terms of the advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 "Green Belts", and is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been shown by the applicant which would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The proposal would also conflict with Policy V5 of the City Of York Draft Local Plan (CYDLP) which does not permit touring caravan sites in Green Belt where there is an adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt and GB1 of the CYDLP which does not support development that detracts from the open character of the green belt.

2 The proposal would enlarge the area currently occupied by caravans, thereby encroaching into open countryside to the detriment of visual amenity and the attractive rural character of the area. This is considered contrary to policies V5 and V1 (f) of the City of York Draft Local plan

3 The application site is, in part, located in flood zone 3. The applicant has failed to provide sufficient evidence to meet the sequential test set out in Annex D of Planning Policy Statement 25 "Development and Flood Risk" (PPS25) and in the absence of sufficient information to demonstrate that the site is "sequentially preferable" the proposal conflicts with Central Government advice in PPS25, PPS7 ("Sustainable Development in Rural Areas") and the Good Practice Guide for Tourism and Planning 2006

7.0 INFORMATIVES:

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