

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - 21 October 2015

AGENDA ITEM NO	2
APPLICATION NO	2689/15
PROPOSAL	Use of land for the stationing of up to 23 holiday lodges and 1 lodge for a site manager.
SITE LOCATION	Honey Pot Farm Caravan Park, Bury Road, Wortham, IP22 1PW
SITE AREA (Ha)	1.85
APPLICANT	Mr & Mrs Feeney
RECEIVED	July 30, 2015
EXPIRY DATE	October 30, 2015

REASONS FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason :

- (1) the Head of Economy considers the application to be of a controversial nature having regard to the planning reasoning expressed by the Parish Council and the extent and planning substance of comments received from third parties

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

1. No pre application advice was given in respect of this application

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2. This application relates to an established camping and caravan site located on the southern side of Wortham village. The site is accessed via a vehicular access from the main A143 Bury to Diss road across Wortham Green. This access also serves some residential properties which front on to the Green, and a bungalow associated with the camping site. A 5m metre wide access drive between two residential properties leads to the site.

The application site has an area of approximately 1.85ha and is currently laid out with individual pitches for siting of caravans or tents. One pitch is used on a seasonal basis by a site manager. There is a permanent amenity block on site and the site is defined by established boundary hedging and includes a fishing lake at the southern end. Part of the site in the south eastern corner adjacent to the lake is currently set aside as an informal recreational area and not used for camping/caravan pitches.

HISTORY

3. The planning history relevant to the application site is:

2495/06	Variation of con 5 of 1044/94 to allow warden caravan between 1/4-1/9 yearly.	Granted 18/1/07
1044/94	Use of land as caravan and camping site to accommodate up to 35 units (caravan/tents) and ancillary recreation area	Granted 3/4/95
0545/95	Erection of 4no. two storey dwellings and garages; Erection of 1no. single storey dwelling and garage to serve Honeypot Farm; Private sewage treatment plants, access drives using existing vehicular access and route over common and resiting of existing garage.	Granted 30/11/1995
0081/ 95	Change of use of agricultural land to camping & caravan	Granted 20/6/95
0970/83	Retention of use of land for caravan site accommodating 12 caravans,	Granted 03/01/1984
0996/78	Retention of use of land for caravan site accommodating 12 caravans and use of access across green	Granted 15/03/1979

PROPOSAL

4. Planning permission is sought for the use of land for the stationing of 23 holiday lodges and 1 lodge for a site manager, with associated access roads and parking spaces. The application is supported by an indicative illustration of a holiday lodge which shows a three bedroom unit which is timber clad unit with a shallow pitched roof. An indicative layout plan of the site shows units evenly spaced over the whole site.

The application is supported with a statement which states that it is intended to provide the holiday accommodation on the site for 11 months of the year to ensure viability and meet the demand for holiday accommodation outside the summer season. The proposed lodge for a site manager would be required for 12 month occupation. The proposed lodges would not be permanent dwellings but would conform with the definition of 'caravans' as set out in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

POLICY

5. **Planning Policy Guidance**

See Appendix below.

CONSULTATIONS

6. Wortham Parish Council

Main objections raised:

- Density of lodges and layout
- occupancy - length of time allowed
- environmental and landscape destruction
- lack of amenity space/play area for children
- lack of detail of infrastructure - lighting, sewage, roads
- lack of detail on ownership of lodges and business model

SCC Highway Authority

- SCC does not wish to restrict the grant of permission for the current proposal.

MSDC Heritage

- The Heritage Team considers that the proposal would cause no harm to a designated heritage asset because although use of the site would become more intensive, this would not amount to material harm to the setting of the nearby listed building.
- The existing campsite lies on former farmland to the rear of Greens Farmhouse which is listed under its original name of Honeypot Farmhouse. It is a farmhouse of the 1600s, timber-framed and rendered with pantile roof, standing at the edge of Wortham Green, which should itself be considered an undesignated heritage asset. The relationship between the Green, the farmhouse and the agricultural land behind is a classic example of green-edge development, and is highly characteristic of the Mid Suffolk area and adjacent areas, and makes an important contribution to the setting and significance of the listed farmhouse. While the area immediately to the rear of the farmhouse has been used as storage in connection with the campsite, the camping area is separated by tree planting, and retains some rural character in its landscape treatment.
- The proposal would have the effect of exchanging tents and caravans for holiday lodges, which would have a more fixed and permanent appearance, and a more formal layout. The land would have a more developed character. While this is not without impact on the setting of the listed building, in the existing context the degree of harm is unlikely to warrant refusal on heritage grounds.

SCC Fire and Rescue

- access to building for fire appliances must meet requirements of Building Regulations
- recommends uses of existing area of open water as emergency water supply

SCC Archaeological Service

- recommends condition requiring site investigation and report

MSDC Housing Supply and Condition Officer

- as long as the usual site conditions following the Caravan Sites & Control of Development Act 1960 regarding density, spacing and boundaries are adhered to then no objection to the proposals.

MSDC Landscape Officer

- no objection to this application as trees are not proposed for removal and should remain unaffected by the scheme. The existing boundary planting is useful in helping to screen the site but this should not require protection unless excavation is required in close proximity.

LOCAL AND THIRD PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

7. One representation has been received:

- development represents "planning creep"
- potential for temporary units to be replaced with residential properties
- narrow access road with potential for traffic noise impact for neighbouring residents
- increase in use of site to 11 months of the year will increase traffic
- unlikely that visitors will use public transport to access site
- potential light pollution
- visitors likely to bring their own provisions and not use village shop
- site will be more attractive to guests than the current 'rustic' campsite
- will result in increased activity and traffic movements with lodges having to be cleaned and serviced
- access into the site is from public highway (Bury Road) crosses common land, insufficient width of access for vehicles to pass which could result in vehicles waiting on A143
- if consent granted semi-rural position will be destroyed with 28 units on site with additional traffic, noise, and loss of privacy to neighbouring property

ASSESSMENT

8. There are a number of considerations which will be addressed as follows.

- Principle of Development
- Site History
- Restriction on occupation
- Design and Layout
- Highway and Access Issues
- Residential Amenity
- Landscape Impact and Trees
- Heritage
- Sustainability
- Conclusion

Principle of Development

For the purpose of the Core Strategy Wortham is designated as a secondary village. The site is located to the south of the defined housing settlement boundary, in the Countryside. Access to the site is located alongside the boundary of a grade II listed building.

The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') at para 28 give weight to supporting economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. It also encourages Local Authorities to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which benefit businesses in rural areas, including supporting provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy states that development in the countryside will be restricted to certain categories of development. Recreation and tourism are accepted, in principle.

Policy RT19 of the Local Plan states that holiday chalets will be permitted where there are no adverse effects on the character and appearance of the landscape, existing residential amenity and highway safety.

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states: "*Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as: the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside*". The NPPF further states that authorities should promote a strong rural economy by supporting sustainable leisure and other development in the countryside. Policy H7 similarly strictly controls new housing outside settlement boundaries that is unrelated to the needs of the countryside. Although there is no specific policy relating to accommodation for a site manager of a holiday lodge facility, as recreation development, it is supported in general by policy CS2 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy 2008. The principle of having an on site warden to supervise functioning of the site has been accepted with the current use as a camping and caravan site with up to 35 pitches. The proposal for up to 23 holiday lodges is a significant proposal in terms of contributing to the rural economy and in the context of the NPPF and Policy CS2 is considered that the principle of having a permanent lodge on site for occupation by a site manager is justified for the functional need of managing the site.

The occupation of the proposed managers lodge would be restricted by way of a condition to ensure that it would only be occupied by persons employed by the site for the purpose of managing the site.

With regard to the occupation of the holiday lodges, in order to limit the potential for long term occupation and ensure that they are only used for short term holiday occupation, it is considered appropriate that a condition restricting occupation to a maximum of 28 days, with no return during the following 28 days. The applicant has indicated that it is intended to provide holiday accommodation on the site for 11 months of the year.

Site History

The site has an established planning history for use as a camping and caravan site. In March 1995 full planning permission was granted (1044/95) for up to 35 caravans or tents at any one time, with a restriction that occupation should be for no longer than 28 days within any 2 month period. A condition restricted the use of the site from 1st March to 30th November. Subsequent to this there have been permissions granted for the siting of a caravan to be sited for occupation by a site warden for the period when the site was open.

Design and Layout

An indicative layout of the site which accompanies the application indicates a layout of the lodges evenly spaced over the whole site. Pitches are proposed in close proximity to the existing fishing lake to take advantage of views over the lake. The spacing and density of the lodges would be dictated by the terms of a site licence which would need to be obtained as it is defined as a caravan site.

Highway and Access Issues

The site is provided with an existing vehicular access from the A143 via a tarmaced driveway which currently serves residential properties and the existing camping and caravan site. The Highway Authority have raised no objection to the use of this access to serve the proposed development. A query over the right to use this access over Common Land has been raised. With regard to this it would be for the applicant or the owner of the site to establish that there is a right of access, the granting of planning permission does not imply or grant any right.

Concerns have been expressed by the occupier of the property alongside the access drive ("Byron House") on the grounds that the proposal is likely to increase the level of vehicular activity as there would be more activity all the year round rather than only the seasonal period between March and November as at present. In response to these concerns it is considered that currently the maximum number of caravans which can occupy the site is 35, the proposal for lodges will reduce this number to 23, with a commensurate reduction in the level of traffic generation. There would be no vehicles towing caravans into or out of the site. It is considered that there would be no material change in the impact of vehicle movements into or out of the site resulting from the proposal and on balance would not represent significant harm to warrant refusal.

Residential Amenity

The principle of the use of the site for a leisure use has been established for many years with the use of the site as a camping and caravan site for up to 35 caravans and tents. There is no record of any noise complaints arising from the use of the site as currently operated. There is no reason to suggest that the use of the site with holiday lodges would result in any adverse noise impact. The site would be managed by a permanent site manager who could respond to any complaints raised. No objection has been raised by the Environmental Health Officer to the proposal.

Landscape Impact and Trees

The site is located in the countryside and is currently landscaped with grass interspersed with some established semi-mature trees. Established hedging on the site boundaries screen the site from wider view, this is to be retained. A

public footpath which runs outside the site along the eastern boundary would be unaffected by the proposal. Part of the site adjacent to the lake is currently not used for the siting of caravans or tents, and it is intended to incorporate this part into the area to be used for siting the holiday lodges. This is currently an informal recreational area, however there would be sufficient space remaining to create an amenity space or play area if that was required by the site owner. It is considered that the proposal would have no adverse impact upon the character of the wider countryside.

Heritage Issues

The Suffolk Archaeological Service have raised no objection to the proposal but have requested that an archaeological investigation of the site should be undertaken. The access into the site runs alongside the boundary of Greens Farmhouse (formerly Honeypot Farmhouse) which is a Grade II listed building. The Conservation Officer has advised that there would be no harm caused to the setting of this listed building by the proposal.

Sustainability

The site is located close to the centre of the village which has a small village store, post office and tea room, and a public house. Both of these businesses would be within walking distance of the proposed holiday lodges. It is considered that the proposal would be likely to contribute toward the long term economic sustainability of these rural businesses.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal represents a significant investment in this established leisure use of the site. Policy seeks to ensure that support is given to economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity, subject to ensuring that developments cause no material harm to residential amenity, highway safety or the environment. It is the opinion of your officers that the proposal represents a positive sustainable development that accords with policy and which would provide acceptable holiday accommodation in this rural location. On this basis your officer recommend that, subject to conditions, support is given to the development.

RECOMMENDATION

That Full Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions :

- Development to commence within 3 years
- Details and siting of lodge for site manager to be specified. Occupation of the specified lodge to be only by a person or persons employed to provide on site management.
- Lodges to be layout in accordance with submitted layout plan
- Holiday lodges permitted shall be for holiday purposes only. There shall be no permanent residential use, including any use within Class C3
- Holiday lodges to be occupied for a maximum period of 28 days with no return for 28 days. No unit on the site, apart from site manager unit, shall be occupied at any time in the period 10th January to 10th February in any year.
- Maximum of 23 holiday lodges, and 1 site manager lodge to be sited on site.
- No external storage to take place

- Details of areas for storage of refuse bins to be agreed

Philip Isbell
Corporate Manager - Development Management

Stephen Burgess
Planning Officer

APPENDIX A - PLANNING POLICIES

1. Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Development Plan Document and the Core Strategy Focused Review

Cor1 - CS1 Settlement Hierarchy

Cor5 - CS5 Mid Suffolks Environment

CSFR-FC1 - PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CSFR-FC1.1 - MID SUFFOLK APPROACH TO DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2. Mid Suffolk Local Plan

GP1 - DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF DEVELOPMENT

HB1 - PROTECTION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

RT12 - FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

CL8 - PROTECTING WILDLIFE HABITATS

T9 - PARKING STANDARDS

T10 - HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

RT17 - SERVICED TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

3. Planning Policy Statements, Circulars & Other policy

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

APPENDIX B - NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

Letter(s) of representation(s) have been received from a total of **1** interested party(ies).

The following people **objected** to the application

The following people **supported** the application:

The following people **commented** on the application: