

Application No: 11/0358N

Location: NEW FARM, LONG LANE, WETTENHALL, CW7 4DW

Proposal: Extension to Existing Caravan Park to Provide 10 Seasonal Pitches and 13 Tourist Pitches (23 Total)

Applicant: Mr M Rowland

Expiry Date: 13-Apr-2011

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES:

- Principal of Development;
- Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Open Countryside;
- Amenity;
- Drainage;
- Ecology;
- Conditions; and
- Highways

REFFERAL

This application is to be determined by the Southern Planning Committee as it is a proposal on a site area which exceeds 1ha.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

New Farm is accessed from Long Lane and is a 2 storey detached property constructed out red facing brick under a tile roof. Located immediately to the rear of this property are a number of traditional brick outbuildings which vary in size and height. Located to the east of these outbuildings are a number of steel portal frame structures, many of which are in a poor state of repair. However, to the south and west of the applicants dwelling is a caravan site, which is the subject of this application.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application is for the provision of additional 6 pitches to the site (resulting in a total of 23 pitches) and to make 10 of the pitches into seasonal pitches. In addition, there is an existing condition which restricts the number of nights that visitors can stay, to no longer than 3 nights. The applicant proposes to vary this condition so that visitors can stay for up to 28 nights and this will be for the remaining 13 pitches.

RELEVANT HISTORY

7/08033 – Erection of Steel Framed Agricultural Building – Approved – 14th May 1981
P94/0259 – Implements Building – Approved – 2nd June 1994
P01/0950 – Cubicle Building – Approved – 9th November 2001
P03/0407 – Demolition of Agricultural Buildings and Conversion into 3 no. Dwellings with Garage – Approved – 29th September 2003
P05/0628 – Barn Conversion, Realignment of Access Road and Erection of Double Garage – Approved – 8th July 2005
P05/1310 – Barn Conversion to B & B accommodation, Demolition of Agricultural Buildings, New Toilet Block and Caravan Park – Approved – 2nd October 2006
P06/0911 – Proposed Fishing Lake and Adjacent Car Park – Approved – 2nd October 2006
P06/1354 – Enlargement of Proposed Toilet Block Serving Fishing Lake – Approved – 22nd January 2007
P09/0035 – Proposed Agricultural Store and Workshop (GDO) – Planning Permission Required – 2nd February 2009
09/0974N – Amendment to Residential Planning Approval P03/0407 to Provide Single Residential Unit and Two Rental Units in Association with Adjacent Caravan Park – Withdrawn – 6th July 2009
09/3864N - Amendment to Residential Planning Approval P03/0407 to Provide Single Residential Unit and Two Rental Units in Association with Adjacent Caravan Park – Approved – 15th January 2010
10/1118N – Non Material Minor Amendment to Residential Planning Approval P03/0407 to Change Detail of One Residential Unit – Withdrawn – 26th August 2010
10/3605N - Amendment to Residential Planning Approval P03/0407 to Change Detail of One Residential Unit – Approved – 15th November 2010

POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

NE.2 Open Countryside
NE.5 Nature Conservation and Habitats
NE.9 Protected Species
NE.20 Flood Prevention
BE.1 Amenity
BE.2 Design
BE.3 Access and Parking
BE.4 Drainage Utilities and Resources
BE.5 Infrastructure
TRAN.3 Pedestrians
TRAN.5 Provision for Cyclists
TRAN.9 Car Parking Standards
RT.6 Recreational Uses in the Open Countryside
RT.10 Touring Caravans and Camping Sites

Other Material Considerations

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPG13: Transport
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk.
Good Practice Guide on Tourism
Planning for Growth

CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways: No comments received at the time of writing this report

Ecology: I do not anticipate there being any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development.

Environmental Health: No objections subject to the following conditions

The hours of construction (and associated deliveries to the site) of the development shall be restricted to 08:00 to 18:00 hours on Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 14:00 hours on Saturday, with no work at any other time including Sundays and Public Holidays. To protect the amenities of nearby residents and the occupiers of nearby property.

Any external lighting of the proposed site should be submitted to and approved by the borough council before being installed, due to the close proximity of local residents.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

No comments at the time of writing this report

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No representations received

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Design and Access Statement

A Design and Access statement has been submitted to accompany the application. This is available on the application file and provides an understanding of the proposal and why it is required.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principal of Development

Policy NE.2 (Open Countryside) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan allows for "essential" development for agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, essential works undertaken by a public service authority or statutory undertaker, or for other uses

appropriate to the rural area. Policy RT.10 (Touring Camping and Camping Sites) allows for touring caravan and camping sites where a number of criteria are met. Policy RT.7 (Visitor Accommodation) in relation to visitor accommodation allows hotel or guest house accommodation within settlement boundaries or for the change of use of existing residential accommodation in the open countryside to guest houses. Policy RT.6 (Recreational Uses in the Open Countryside) allows for recreational uses in the open countryside. It is considered that the provision of touring pitches is not in itself a recreational use, but it is connected to the recreational use of the land.

According to Policy EC7 of PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth states that Local Planning Authorities should support sustainable rural tourism which benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise rather than harm the character of the countryside. It notes the need to support the provision and expansion of tourist facilities in sustainable locations where possible and also recognises that facilities may be required in other locations where they are provided in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction. This policy therefore supports tourist accommodation way from a village or settlement where this is related to an existing tourist facility. The policy notes that new or expanded holiday and touring caravan sites should not be prominent in the landscape and any visual intrusion should be minimised by effective high quality screening. This advice is also advocated in PPS 7 which states that *"In considering planning policies and development proposals for static and touring caravan parks...planning authorities should...ensure that new or expanded sites are not prominent in the landscape and that any visual intrusion is minimised by effective, high quality screening"* (paragraph 39)

Policy EC12 of PPS4 notes that when determining planning applications for economic development in rural areas, sites which are remote from local service centres may be an acceptable location for development, even if not readily accessible by public transport. Further support for the provision of rural tourist accommodation is found in The Good Practice Guide on Tourism. The Guide notes that holiday parks are the largest providers of rural bed space and that the provision of tourist accommodation can help to support the local economy and provide for rural diversification. It advises of the need to balance concerns to protect the landscape and minimise environmental impacts with the need to provide adequate facilities.

Policy EC10.1 requires Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Paragraph 4 of the document states that 'economic development' includes not only Class B employment uses but all uses which provide employment and generate wealth. Planning applications that encourage sustainable economic development should be treated favourably. Furthermore, recent Government guidance states that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development and LPA's should take a positive approach to development.

Whilst PPS 4 (Policy EC7: Planning for Tourism in Rural Areas) notes the need to carefully weigh the objectives of providing adequate facilities or enhancing visitors' enjoyment or improving the financial viability with the need to protect the landscape, it does not require the authority to test the viability of the proposal.

The existing caravan park was completed in May 2007 and according to the agent the development has operated successfully for three complete seasons. The agent states that

due to high demand there is a requirement for the additional pitches and as such will create additional economic benefits for the wider rural community.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Open Countryside

The benefits to the rural economy must therefore be balanced against the effect upon the open countryside given that the rear and side of the site is relatively exposed. According to the submitted plans the additional 6 pitches will be located immediately adjacent to the west of the existing caravan pitches and beyond the proposal are a number of fishing lakes. Located to the north of the application site is a car park and a toilet/shower block, whilst to the south are open fields. The application site is currently laid to grass and the proposed pitches will be constructed out of crushed hardcore and a condition relating to surfacing materials will be condition accordingly. The car parking will be dispersed within the site avoiding the need for large areas of hardcore. Whilst the siting of caravans will have a visual impact upon the open countryside they will be seen against the back drop of the existing caravan park. Furthermore it is possible to provide landscaping around the perimeter of the site in order to mitigate for the effect of the caravans and ensure that the character of the open countryside is not affected. Overall, it is not considered that the additional caravans would have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area and the proposal is in accordance with policy BE.2 (Design Standards).

Amenity

Apart from the applicants property (New Farm) which is located approximately 45m to the north east of the application site. The next nearest property is Long Lane Farm Cottage which is located to the east of the application. There is a distance in excess of 270m separating the application site from this property. It is considered given the separation distances, and vegetation, no significant amenity issues are raised in relation to this property. The effect on residents of other houses nearby would be negligible. It is considered that the intensification of site use by the introduction of additional pitches will have a negligible impact on the amenities of the occupiers of the other buildings and occupiers of the caravan park and the proposal complies with policy BE.1 (Amenity).

Drainage

According to the submitted planning application forms the proposed method for drainage would be via a septic tank. Development on sites such as this generally reduces the permeability of at least part of the site and changes the site's response to rainfall. Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) states that in order to satisfactorily manage flood risk in new development, appropriate surface water drainage arrangements are required. The guidance also states that surface water arising from a developed site should, as far as possible, be managed in a sustainable manner to mimic the surface water flows arising from the site prior to the proposed development. It is possible to condition the submission of a drainage scheme in order to ensure that any surface water runoff generated by the development is appropriately discharged.

Ecology

The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The Directive only allows disturbance, or deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places,

- in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment

and provided that there is

- no satisfactory alternative and
- no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range

The UK implements the Directive in the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 which contain two layers of protection

- a requirement on Local Planning Authorities (“LPAs”) to have regard to the Directive’s requirements above, and
- a licensing system administered by Natural England.

Circular 6/2005 advises LPAs to give due weight to the presence of protected species on a development site to reflect EC requirements. “This may potentially justify a refusal of planning permission.”

PPS9 (2005) advises LPAs to ensure that appropriate weight is attached to protected species “Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm [LPAs] will need to be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative site that would result in less or no harm. In the absence of such alternatives [LPAs] should ensure that, before planning permission is granted, adequate mitigation measures are put in place. Where ... significant harm ... cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought. If that significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.”

PPS9 encourages the use of planning conditions or obligations where appropriate and again advises [LPAs] to “refuse permission where harm to the species or their habitats would result unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm.”

The converse of this advice is that if issues of detriment to the species, satisfactory alternatives and public interest seem likely to be satisfied, no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations.

It was noted that there was a couple of ponds within 250m of the proposed development and as such the proposal could have a detrimental impact on Great Crested Newts. The applicant has not submitted any information relating to protected species. However, it is considered given the small scale nature of the proposal it will not have any detrimental impact on protected species. Additionally considering the nature of the surrounding land use it is unlikely that the proposed development would result in a significant loss of habitat. Furthermore, the

Councils ecologist has been consulted and he states 'I do not anticipate there being any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development'. Consequently, the proposed development accords with policy NE.9 (Protected Species).

Conditions

In order to ensure that the development is only used for holiday accommodation and not for permanent residential development conditions should be attached as recommended in the Good Practice Guide for Tourism and the Conditions Circular to limit the occupation of the pitches to holiday purposes only, not to be occupied as the persons sole or main place of residence, and for the operator to maintain an up to date register of names of all owner(s) and occupier(s) of each caravan and their main address. Further, the operators should be required to make this record available to the local authority at all reasonable times, upon request.

The applicant is also requesting a variation of condition in order to permit 10 of the pitches to become seasonal pitches and the remaining pitches to be used for up to 28 days. Currently there is a condition on the original permission (P05/1310) which states that *'The use of the caravan site shall be limited to those areas shown on the approved site plan only and shall be limited to touring caravans only. For the purposes of interpreting this condition touring caravans shall be defined as those occupying the site for up to 3 days'*. The applicant has stated due to exceptional demand patrons of the caravan park wish to stay longer than the permitted 3 days and this will help the local economy. However, the applicant has not provided any justification for the seasonal pitches, which normally run from March to October and as such it is not considered appropriate to allow these pitches. However, it is considered only allowing visitors to the site for 3 days is unreasonable and by altering the condition to allow stays for up to 28 days is justifiable in this instance and this will help to ensure that the use of the site remains restricted to holiday touring use, whilst helping the local economy.

Highways

The applicant proposes to access the site via an existing hardcore track which runs along the side of the farm house and serves the existing caravan park. This track exits onto Long Lane and there is a grass verge between the application site and the carriageway edge. As a result of this and the width of the access there is a good level of visibility in either direction and vehicles will be able to enter and exit the site concurrently without queuing back onto the highway. Furthermore, there is sufficient space within the application site for vehicles to enter/leave in a forward gear and be parked clear of the public highway. It is not considered that the amount of additional traffic generated by the proposed extension to the caravan park will result in any highway safety issues and as such the proposal complies with policy BE.3 (Access and Parking).

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The proposed development is an appropriate use within the open countryside and contributes to the tourism offer of the area. It will not have an adverse impact upon neighbouring amenity or highway safety and the scale of the proposal is appropriate to the purpose it will serve in keeping with Policy BE.2 (Design Standards). The proposal therefore complies with Policies NE.2 (Open Countryside), BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Access and

Parking), NE.2 (Open Countryside), NE.5 (Nature Conservation), NE.9 (Protected Species), RT.6 (Recreational Uses in the Open Countryside), RT.10 (Touring Caravans and Camping Sites) and TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011.

Approve subject to conditions:

- 1. Standard Time Limit**
- 2. Plans**
- 3. Surfacing Materials**
- 4. Drainage**
- 5. No External Lighting**
- 6. No Additional Structures including raised platforms, terraces or sheds shall be erected or placed on the site without the prior consent of the Local Planning Authority.**
- 7. Remove additional pitches within 3 months if no longer required**
- 8. Landscaping submitted**
- 9. Landscaping implemented**
- 10. Length of Caravans not to exceed 7m, excluding tow bar**
- 11. The owners/operators shall maintain an up to date register of the names of all owners/occupiers of individual caravans on the site, and of their main home addresses, registration numbers of towing vehicles and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the local authority.**
- 12. Limit the number of caravans on site at any one time to a maximum of 40**
- 13. Limit length of stay to no longer than 28 days**
- 14. Hours of Construction restricted to 08.00 to 18.00 hours on Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1400 hours on Saturday, with no work at any other time including Sundays and Public Holidays**

