DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2016/0698 **Valid 03/11/2016**	**HOLLY GROVE FARM** **THORNEY EDGE ROAD** **BAGNALL**	**CHANGE OF USE FROM DOG BOARDING KENNELS TO SHEPHERDS HUT HOLIDAY LETS, SHOWER BLOCK, CAR PARK AND ACCESS** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of development.
- Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- The impact on the character and appearance of the rural area.
- The impact on highway safety.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the open countryside between Bagnall and Werrington and comprises a field enclosed by trees and which includes former dog kennels buildings connected to Holly Grove Farm. It lies on the west side of Thorney Edge Road. The dwelling at Holly Grove Farm lies to the south-east of the site, next to the road. Otherwise, the site is surrounded by open land.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the change of use of the field from dog kennels to a holiday let use in the form of five mobile "shepherd huts" (with a floorspace of 5 x 2.5 metres and a max height of 3.2 metres). There would be three full time employees. The kennels building would be removed but a small part of the base would be retained to support a proposed timber single-storey facilities block (showers, sinks and store) with a footprint of approx 5 x 16 metres and a mono-pitch roof. There is an existing access and gates leading into a small grassed area between the piggery building and sty and the existing car park to the house to the south. The access and grassed area would be resurfaced to form the access and parking area for the holiday lets. Five spaces are shown but it appears possible to park additional vehicles without compromising the turning space (which could be used as non-resident staff parking). The site plan also shows the general area of the field where the holiday let shepherd huts would be sited. A septic tank/small sewage plant is also proposed. Amended plans (received on 23.12.16) show the inclusion of WC's into the amenities block.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
SS6c – Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
E3 – Tourism
R1 – Rural Diversification
DC3 – Landscape Impact

National Planning Policy Framework

Sections 3 (Rural Economy), 7 (Design) and 9 (Green Belts)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 28.12.16
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No objection subject to conditions.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt where there are restrictive planning policies (as set out in the governments NPPF) which limit development to a small number of criteria. One of those criteria is the redevelopment of brownfield land, providing this results in no additional impact on the openness of the Green Belt. I consider the proposal would comply with this, if it could be deemed to be a brownfield site. The site

comprises dog kennels buildings which can constitute brownfield land. However, these may formerly have been agricultural buildings and the NPPF normally excludes current or former farm buildings from being defined as brownfield.

It is debatable whether or not the site is brownfield. If it was not deemed to be brownfield, the proposal would not fall under any of the criteria of "appropriate" development in the Green Belt. However, "inappropriate" development (which does not fall under any of the criteria for development allowed in the Green Belt) can be allowed where, in the words of the NPPF, there are "very special circumstances" which are considered to outweigh the "harm" to the Green Belt or operation of Green Belt policy. I consider that such circumstances exist.

This is because the proposal would remove all the existing kennels buildings on site, leaving part of the concrete base to be used for the erection of single-storey timber-clad facilities building (i.e. showers, WC's, sinks). This is much smaller than the building to be removed. Although the existing kennels building is not harmfully prominent in the overall landscape due to its flat-roofed single-storey form, it is still visible from the public highway and appears untidy. Its replacement with a much smaller flat-roofed timber clad building which has the appearance of horse stables and five shepherd huts/gypsy caravans (which cumulatively with the amenities building would still be much smaller than the kennels buildings) would improve the appearance of the site as there would be less development and less harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore the timber building and shepherd huts would be more in keeping with the character and appearance of the rural area than the current development.

Although the proposal would result in the creation of car park, the current access exists and this would be well screened behind road-side hedging and other buildings. It would also be on flat area of land (as oppose to the holiday let field which is on a lower part of the property) so would not intrude into views across the landscape. The materials for the parking area can be controlled by way of a condition to minimise further the visual impact. Despite the additional hard-surfacing associated with the scheme, I consider the overall proposal would still result in an improvement to the character and appearance of the area and the openness of the Green Belt.

Tourist accommodation uses are a generally acceptable rural diversification use under policy R1. Policy E3 is the main tourism policy and encourages this in sustainable locations close to existing settlement. The proposal is not directly compliant with this policy due to its location and also not being in an area where tourism is particularly prevalent or encouraged. However, due to the small amount of new-build in place of removed buildings and the non-permanent nature of the shepherd huts it is not a clear breach of the policy either. The site was used as kennels with 22 pens and the re-use for this purpose is likely to lead to more vehicle movements than the use of the site as five small holiday lets. In this respect, the proposal is no less sustainable than the previous use and is an acceptable rural economic use.

The proposal is acceptable in terms of the impact on the highway network, especially when compared to the previous kennels use. Visibility at the access is acceptable subject to some trimming of the road-side hedges.

In terms of residential amenity, there are no nearby dwellings other than the dwellinghouse within the property.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

To conclude, the proposal is an acceptable re-use of a rural kennels site and would not harm the openness of the Green Belt and would lead to an improvement to the character and appearance of the immediate area.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 23.12.16

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Haywood, Ben

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council