

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0335
Valid 28/07/2021

KNYPERSLEY MILL FARM
JUDGEFIELD LANE
BROWN EDGE

EXTENSION OF EXISTING
'CERTIFICATED SITE'
CAMPSITE TO
ACCOMMODATE 11
CARAVANS, 4 SHEPHERD'S
HUTS, 1 VARDOS STYLE
CARAVAN AND NEW
HARDSTANDING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Impact on the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The small farmstead dates from the 19th C. It is accessed via a straight driveway track from the highway. The farm is surrounded by open countryside, characterised by small scale, irregularly shaped field parcels that are enclosed by traditional hedgerows on the slopes of undulating or rounded hillsides.

On the high ground of the rounded hill top to the north west of the farmstead the applicant operates an exempted certified site for members of the camping and caravan club.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes a material change of use that would provide a new or extended open market caravan site with a total of 11 pitches for transient caravans, 4 permanently sited shepherd huts, and 1 permanently sited vardos style caravan.

Integral to that material change of use the application includes a proposal to retain hard standings.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape Character
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

NPPF July 2021

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 24th September 2021

Neighbour Consultation expires: 24th Sep 2021

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

5 Objections have been received from local residents, the following comments are raised:

- The land is already used in excess of the permissions provided by the GPDO
- The waste water from toilets, showers, laundry and other means must pose a threat to the Mill Pond and Head Of Trent.
- The access arrangement is dangerous and presents a highway danger.
- The development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the naturally beautiful area.
- The amenity enjoyed by nearby residents would be adversely affected by traffic volume and the noise from visitors.
- High Tension power cables cross the upper caravan/Camp site this could be dangerous should a user fly a remote control aircraft or kite
- An ecological impact study has not been submitted with the application to determine how the development might affect ecology and biodiversity.
- I believe the applicant has submitted the incorrect ownership certificate because he does not own all of the application land.
- Some of the hardstanding already installed, explained as an access to maintain the Mill Pond is simply the provision of an additional caravan pitch, this element has not been included on the application.
- A CCTV camera system that has been installed on the campsite it monitors movements without consent.
- The development would be incongruous and highly visible within the greenbelt location. The development would not comply with Green Belt policy and would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and there are no special circumstances that would outweigh that harm.

- The site occupies an unsustainable location it is not served by public transport or well connected to local amenities or facilities.
- Object to the proposed planning if it uses shared access to Knypersley Mill and Knypersley Mill Farm. Are against if it overlooks Knypersley Mill as the caravans are set on an elevated area stopping the privacy to our property Knypersley Mill (listed building)

4 supporters, from outside of the locality and apparently users of the existing site, have submitted comments to the effect that it is a tranquil pleasant site that offers opportunity for access to the countryside and recreation, and that tourism supports local economy.

Town / Parish Comments

Brown Edge Parish Council: No Objection

Conservation Officer

The assessment of the extent to which the application site contributes to the significance of the setting of Knypersley Mill, and the extent to which this proposal will impact on that setting is not fully assessed. The statement comments that the campsite is far enough separated from the historic buildings that there is no effect on the setting or significance of the buildings but this could be expanded upon.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection subject to standard type conditions

Severn Trent

No Objection minimal impact on the public sewer.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

Development within the Green Belt is inappropriate, and by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions on the closed lists that appear at paras. 149 and 150 of the NPPF. At para 150 (e) material change of use is one such exception, provided it preserves Green Belt openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The LP reiterates this stance in Policies SS2 and SS10. In particular, the latter states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

As the application scheme is to use agricultural land, benefiting only from limited uses permitted by the General Permitted Development Order, for eleven pitches for touring caravans or motorhomes, and five permanently sited caravans with associated works and hard standings, it would change the physical nature and character of the land and the land use, and so it would constitute a material change of use of the land.

As set out in paragraph 137 of the Framework, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics thereof

are their openness and permanence. The physical presence of built or other structural forms may affect openness.

The proposed site plan shows how the caravans or motorhomes would be closely spaced, with towing vehicles situated between, across an exposed area of open land where additional areas of the land would be occupied by touring pitches and permanently sited caravan types. There are open views available of the site from the surrounding high ground. Moreover, even when the site would not be at full capacity, the presence of the collective mass of caravans, motorhomes, and other associated vehicles, would inevitably result in a harmful loss of openness of the Green Belt in both visual and spatial terms.

Paragraph 138 of the NPPF clarifies that the Green Belt serves five purposes, including to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Given that the scheme would encroach into the countryside it would conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The exception in the NPPF requires that such proposals must both preserve openness 'and' not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The development proposed would encroach into a part of the countryside that is currently undeveloped, and in that regard would be harmful to the essential characteristics of the Green Belt, namely its openness and permanence. The loss of openness identified would mean that, in the context of paragraph 149 of the Framework, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Impact on Character and Appearance

The high ground of the rounded hill top providing the site, are exposed to open countryside, characterised by small scale, irregularly shaped field parcels that are enclosed by traditional hedgerows on the slopes of undulating or rounded hillsides. From Green Way Bank to the east and surrounding footpaths there are unrestricted views across open countryside toward the edges of the site area.

The caravans of varying sizes and shapes and their towing vehicles, would be exposed and apparent in the open countryside landscape, albeit it to differing degrees. However, overall the development would create an exposed and alien intrusion. Where the caravans are visible they would be alien and intrusive features within green rolling countryside. The predominantly white and reflective nature of caravans and motorhomes would stand out against the surrounding primarily green landscape, and be highly visible, particularly when planting is not in leaf. The rural character of the site and its surroundings would therefore be eroded and the proposal would be harmful to the locally distinctive character of this part of the district. The 'permitted' 5 van site already causes visual intrusion and disruption that detracts from the quality landscape, and with an increase in caravan numbers, periods of occupancy, and land areas used, the detrimental impact would be more so. There would conflict with policies SS10, DC1, DC3, and E4 of the Local Plan.

Other Considerations

There is an appreciation that the existing use of the site for camping and caravanning is, in a limited way, 'permitted' on the agricultural land by other legislation, with the associated certification process administered by The Camping and Caravanning Club.

However, this proposal, would essentially supplant that use with a new use that would introduce a significantly greater number of caravans, some of which would be permanently sited on new areas of the land. This new use would also be free from the constraint imposed by the terms of the Club certificate which is time limited and must be renewed annually. The rights conferred by the certification of the site do not equate to planning permission for the use of the land for camping and caravanning or an established use right for the same.

Although there is some existing impact on openness associated with the 'permitted' use of the site, the harm to openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the countryside is annually time-limited and further restricted by an occupancy period imposed by the Club. Following the expiration of the period of certification, the site would revert back to its previous agricultural use. The 'permitted' use should by virtue of its constraint be only intermittent but, with planning permission, would come greater occupancy of the site due to relaxations on advertising and the member-only usage of the site, currently imposed by the Club.

Based on the above, the harms to the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the countryside associated with the 'permitted' use would evidently be less than the harms associated with the proposed permanent use.

The increased capacity of the site by all members of the public, not just members of the Club, would provide greater potential for valuable income to the appellant during the camping and caravanning season and enable competition with other unrestricted sites. There would also be indirect benefits to the local economy as spending in local shops, facilities, services and tourist attractions may be increased as a result of more visits to the site. Despite the compliance of these matters with elements of Policy E4 of the LP, these benefits are afforded limited weight.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

The appeal scheme is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This is harmful by definition. The proposal would reduce the Green Belt's openness which gives rise to additional harm. These harms render the appeal scheme contrary to the aims of both the policies of the development plan, as identified, and the relevant sections of the Framework. The development would also have significantly detrimental effects to the character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to relevant development plan policies. Paragraph 148 of the Framework advises that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is 'clearly outweighed by other considerations.' There are no other considerations in this case that are sufficient, either individually or cumulatively, to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harm identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan. There are no other material considerations that would indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, for the reasons given, I conclude planning permission should be refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 28th September 2021

X

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council