

Planning Committee

09 August 2011

Reference:
APP/11/00740

Area Team:
North Team

Case Officer:
Mrs S Lacey

Ward:
Hoylake and Meols

Location:
Proposal:

Land adjacent to East View Farm, PARK ROAD, MEOLS, CH47 7AU
Siting of 2 additional holiday caravans (allowing a total of 29 caravans on the site) and extension of season to allow the site to operate as a holiday park all year round

Applicant:
Agent :

Britaniacrest Ltd
GVA Humberts Leisure

Site Plan:



Development Plan allocation and policies:

Green Belt
Coastal Zone

Planning History:

APP/05/06316 Change of use of the land to allow siting of 20 static holiday caravans on land currently used for caravan storage together with landscape improvements Approve 05/08/2005

APP/08/06549 Variation of condition 6 to APP/05/06316 to allow the siting of 27 caravans Approved 01/05/2009

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:

REPRESENTATIONS:

3 letters of notification were sent to the occupiers of neighbouring properties and a site notice was displayed on Park Road. One objection was received citing the following concerns:

1. The description is not valid;
2. The proposal is to increase the number of units and enlarge the size of units from 27 single units to 21 double units and 8 single units, thereby increasing the amount of structural and visible mass from 1617sqm to 2041sqm within the green belt. The previous permissions were approved on the basis of limited intrusion into the green belt;
3. The application is retrospective;
4. In the previous permission tree planting was proposed, which is no longer possible or proposed;
5. The caravans to the north and east boundaries of the site are much closer to the site boundaries than previous, giving a much more visually built up appearance from the access lane to East View Farm;
6. The movement of four caravans closer to the northern boundary of the site would bring residents in closer contact with the activities of the adjacent stables, which would be detrimental to residents in terms of noise and environmental issues;
7. The occupation of the site by 29 static caravans is an overdevelopment of the site and will adversely affect the openness of the green belt;
8. The aerial photograph within the applicant's statement shows clusters of caravans with open space between, the proposed layout of 29 caravans fills the site in a very compacted manner which taken with the solid boundary fences would create the overall appearance of solid built mass;
9. There is minimal space between caravans giving a cramped appearance with minimal individual amenity space;
10. Highway safety and traffic congestion;
11. The proposal does not comply with policies GB2, TLR1, TL9, TL10, PPG2, GPGPT and PPS5.

CONSULTATIONS:

The Environment Agency has no objection subject to a condition tying the permission into the submitted Flood Risk Assessment.

The Director of Technical Services (Traffic Management) has no objection to the proposal.

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management (Environmental Health) has no objection to the proposal.

Director's Comments:

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

The application was removed from delegation by Councillor Hale on the grounds the proposal represents an encroachment on the Green Belt and the application is an attempt to create a residential site by extending the season.

INTRODUCTION

The application proposes the siting of 2 additional holiday caravans (allowing a total of 29 caravans on the site) and extension of season to allow the site to operate as a holiday park all year round.

The application proposes the site is extended approximately 35m to the south east of the previously approved site. The application also proposes much larger caravans than those previously approved. There are proposed 21 caravans measuring 12.19 m x 6.06 m and 8 caravans measuring 12.19 m x 4.87 m.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Caravan parks are not appropriate development for the Green Belt under National Planning Policy PPG2 and UDP Policy GB2. This supported by UDP Policy TLR1 which only make provision for tourist related facilities that can be accommodated within existing buildings or for uses of open land that preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site comprises a caravan park situated within the Green Belt and Coastal Zone and a Site of Biological Importance.

POLICY CONTEXT

UDP Policies GB2, TLR1, TL9, TL10 and CO2 are applicable to this application. National Policies PPG2 Green Belts (1995), PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004) and the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism (GPGTP) are also relevant material considerations.

PPG2 and Policy GB2 set out the national and local policy context and both are generally of a similar content. PPG2 states that planning permission will not be granted unless it is for a limited number of closely defined purposes. These include agriculture or other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. In terms of local policy the same principles are echoed and there is the presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and such development will not be approved except in very special circumstances. UDP Part1 Policy TLR1 makes it clear that tourist facilities outside the urban area will be restricted to existing buildings or uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt. Areas of undeveloped coast are protected from proposals that would prejudice its attractiveness by UDP Policy TL9. More detailed criteria for regulating uses in the Green Belt and the undeveloped coast TL10 and CO2 only permit facilities that appropriate to the setting and character of area and where the proposal clearly requires a coastal location.

PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004) encourages activities that help to diversify rural economies and can play an important economic role, provided that such development is not detrimental to the attractiveness of the countryside. In considering planning policies and development proposals for static holiday and touring caravan parks, planning authorities should carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites, and ensure that new or expanded sites are not prominent in the landscape and that any visual intrusion is minimised by effective, high-quality screening.

The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism was published on 16th May 2006 and contains a model occupancy condition that can be attached to caravan sites to prevent them from becoming permanent residences for occupiers. It is reasonable for the Local Authority to consider approval of a condition restricting use of the caravans for holiday (or seasonal) accommodation only.

APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES

Condition 5 of planning application APP/05/06316 states: "The caravans shall not be occupied except during the period 1st March one year and the 14th January each year". This condition was placed on the application to prevent the permanent occupation of the caravans which is considered to be contrary to Green Belt policies.

The application wishes to vary this condition to allow the site to remain open all year round. The main concern with removing the condition is the caravans could be occupied permanently. The applicant has addressed this by proposing three occupancy conditions (as set out in the Design & Access Statement):

- i) the caravans are occupied for holiday purpose only;
- ii) the caravans shall not be occupied as a person's sole, or main place of residence;
- iii) the owner/operators shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all owners/occupiers and

their main home address.

The main concern with the application is that the caravans do not become permanent residences, which is considered to have a harmful impact on the character of the Green Belt and on the local housing stock, or the wider regeneration aims for the eastern side of the Borough.

A previous Appeal decision (reference APP/E2340/A/10/2137243) concluded that the occupancy of caravans can be controlled by the applicant's suggested conditions rather than limiting the months of occupation, which is a material consideration when determining the application. The Planning Inspectorate concluded whilst it is reasonable and necessary to impose occupancy conditions on caravans to prevent the caravans becoming permanent residences, the use of a condition allowing 11 month occupation fails as it allows caravans to be occupied by the same persons for 11 months of the year as their sole or main residence, as long as they go away for a four week holiday, and does not address the concerns of permanence.

As such appeals have been allowed where the standard holiday occupancy condition is drafted in accordance with the GPGPT, to expressly state that the caravans on the site shall only be used for holiday purposes and not as a person's main or sole place of residence. Such a condition would prevent any permanent residential use. This condition could be enforced simply by requiring the operators of the site to maintain and allow inspections of a register of owners/occupiers which details their main addresses.

The second part of the application is to enlarge the caravan site by approximately 1596 sq m, to allow the siting of 21 caravans measuring 12.19 m x 6.06 m and 8 caravans measuring 12.19 m x 4.87 m. Under the previous applications the caravans had been shown as being 3.5 m in width. As such the proposal represents an overall increase in built floorspace from 1134 sq m to 2026 sq m. This represents a 55% increase in built footprint. The proposed extension of the caravan site area and the larger units is considered to form a visual intrusive feature on the openness of the green belt and will not enhance the landscape. It is considered no very special circumstances have been stated. Any economic benefits to the area are considered to be small given there are only an additional 2 caravans proposed and do not outweigh the harm to the openness of the green belt. The applicant highlights there will be tourism benefits, however policy TL10 Criteria for Tourism Development in the Green Belt sets out tourist attractions and visitor facilities within the Green Belt will only be permitted within the green belt where the nature and scale of the proposal is appropriate and will not cause unacceptable disturbance to neighbouring property or land use.

The previously approved planning application showed the caravans set back from the northwest boundary by 6.5m. The proposed siting of the caravans is 2m away from the northwest boundary. As such the proposed planting schemes conditioned by the previous applications to screen the development are considered likely to be less successful. The enlarged site boundary also requires more boundary fencing, which is considered detrimental to the openness of the green belt.

Whilst the proposal is applying for only two additional caravans, the proposal to extend the existing caravan site is considered to harm the green belt by its encroachment, which is considered to have a prominent and detrimental impact to the landscape and the openness of the green belt.

SEPARATION DISTANCES

Separation distances do not apply in this instance, as no residential properties will be affected by the proposed development in terms of overlooking or loss of privacy.

HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is considered not to significantly increase the volume of traffic on the public highway. There are no highway implications relating to this proposal.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

PPG25 Flooding advises that caravan, camping and other temporary occupancy sites give rise to special problems in relation to flooding. The instability of caravans places their occupants at special risk. The site falls within Flood Zone 2 and the applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment. The Environment Agency had no objection to the proposal subject to a condition tying the permission into the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. There are no environmental or sustainability issues

relating to the proposal.

HEALTH ISSUES

There are no health implications relating to this application.

CONCLUSION

It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the extension of the caravan park would adversely encroach on the surrounding Green Belt and detract from the character and openness of the landscape. It is considered no very special circumstances have been submitted with the application to justify a relaxation of Green Belt policy and as such, the proposals are considered contrary to National Planning Policy Guidance 2 Green Belt (PPG2) and Policies GB2 Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt and TLR1 'Principles for Tourism Development' of the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

Recommended Refuse
Decision:

Reason:

1. It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the extension of the caravan park would encroach on the surrounding green belt and detract from the character of the landscape. It is considered no very special circumstances have been submitted with the application. The proposal is considered contrary to National Planning Policy Guidance PPG2 'Green Belt' and Policies GB2 'Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt', TLR1 'Principles for Tourism Development' TL9 'The Protection of Rural Tourist Attractions and Resources', TL10 'Criteria for Tourism Development in the Green Belt' and CO2 'Development Within the Undeveloped Coastal Zone' of the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

Last Comments By: 28/07/2011 11:16:37
Expiry Date: 10/08/2011