

17/00133/COU

Mr Maurice Venables

**Cllr Brian Cox
Cllr Roy Wright**

**BLYMILL & WESTON
UNDER LIZARD**

**Wyndford Mill Farm Great Chatwell Newport South Staffordshire
TF10 9BJ**

Retrospective application for part change of use of the site for a recreational caravan facility comprising 11 pitches and winter storage facilities. The current situation prevailing since 2015.

1. SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY

1.1 Site Description

1.1.1 The application site relates to an area of land affiliated with Wyndford Mill Farm in the Open Countryside. The site is currently used as a recreational caravan facility and benefits from a Caravan Club License for the siting of 5 pitches and there is a small ablutions block. However, upon my site visit I witnessed nine caravans stationed. This area of land is situated by three ponds and is relatively well screened from the surrounding area by mature trees and hedgerows.

1.1.2 Also on the site there is a storage facility for caravans on two distinct parcels of land. The first storage area is adjacent to the recreational area and is well screened by mature hedgerows. The second area is adjacent to the first area but this parcel of land opens up to the wider farm area. The storage facility does not have planning permission and I witnessed a total of 21 caravans stationed.

1.2 Relevant Planning History

2002, Change of use of land to create 2 fishing pools, Approved (02/00986/COU)

2006, Temporary static caravan site for two years (retrospective), Approved (06/00100/FUL)

2012, Refurbishment/extension of existing blacksmith's cottage for occupancy by a family change of use all within existing footprint, Approved (12/00216/FUL)

2014, Refurbishment/extension of existing blacksmith's cottage for occupancy by a family change of use all within existing footprint. (conditions 3, 4, 5, 6), Split decision (12/00216/COND)

1.3 Pre-application Discussions

1.3.1 None.

2. APPLICATION DETAILS

2.1 The application is retrospective and is for the change of use of land for the siting of 11 recreational caravan pitches and a caravan winter storage area. Upon negotiation with the applicant's agent, it was agreed to omit the second caravan storage area from the plans because of its detrimental impact upon the landscape. New plans have been received and this application is solely for the recreational area and the first parcel of land for storage (refer to para 1.1.2).

2.2 Agent Submission

2.2.1 Design and Access Statement
Sustainable Tourism Statement
Caravan Club Certificate

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The application site is within the Open Countryside.

3.2 Core Strategy Development Plan Document, December 2012:

Core Policy 2 – Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment

OC1 – Development in the Open Countryside Beyond the West Midlands Green Belt

EQ1 – Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets

EQ4 – Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape

EQ9 – Protecting Residential Amenity

EQ11 – Wider Design Considerations

EQ12 – Landscaping

EV2 – Sustainable Tourism

EV11 – Sustainable Travel

4. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Blymhill and Weston-under-Lizard Parish Council (no comments received: expired 09/03/17)

Cllr B. Cox (no comments received: expired 09/03/17)

Cllr R. Wright (received 21/02/17): no comments.

Local Plans (received 07/03/17):

The site is located in the open countryside and therefore is subject to Policy OC1 which seeks to protect open countryside for its own sake, particularly for its landscape and areas of ecological, historic, archaeological, agricultural and recreational value. Development will normally be permitted where the proposed development is for making of a material change of use of land where the use proposed would have no material effect on the appearance and character of the Open Countryside beyond the Green Belt.

Policy OC1 also sets out criteria where development within the open countryside would normally be permitted, including criteria b)

"Appropriate small scale facilities for outdoor sport and recreation facilities for sport or recreation, nature conservation, cemeteries and other uses of land which preserve the appearance or character of the Open Countryside beyond the Green Belt".

Local Plans are of the view that the proposal is not recreation but a tourism use as there is a charge to use the site for accommodation purposes. Furthermore, it is understood that such Camping and Caravan Club 'certificated sites' only accommodate up to 5 caravans or motorhomes and up to 10 tents at any one time, therefore we are of the view that the proposal for 11 pitches along with winter storage facilities is not small scale, and therefore it is concluded that the proposal doesn't meet any of the specific criteria listed in Policy OC1.

However, as the fundamental purpose of the policy is to protect the countryside for its own sake, particularly for its landscapes and areas of ecological, historic, archaeological, agricultural and recreational value, if the proposal is achieving these aims then the proposal, subject to other more detailed considerations such as access, should generally be permitted. Whist all of these factors should be considered, the impact on the landscape is a principal consideration, and purely based on a desk top analysis, it is our view that the proposal for 11 pitches a toilet block, and what appears to be 19 winter storage units, is of such a scale that it is it would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape and therefore would fail to meet the aim of Policy OC1 as well as Policy EQ4: Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape.

Sustainable Tourism

A stated, it is Local Plans view that the proposal is a tourism operation, and therefore Policy EV2 is relevant. The policy requires that outside development boundaries it will be necessary for a business case to be made which identifies how the development will support and make a suitable contribution to the local economy. No business case has been provided, simply a letter from the Camping and Caravan Club confirming that a member of the club had nominated them for 'best facilities'.

Policy EV2 goes on to add:

"The provision of tourist accommodation, including the location of static and touring caravans, will only be permitted if it does not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area, taking account of the capacity of the local area and the highway network to absorb the development."

As already stressed, we have initial concerns that the proposal will have an unacceptable impact on the landscape and therefore there is concern that it may affect the character and appearance of the area.

Summary

The proposal is for 11 pitches and winter storage facilities and is considered a tourism use. The proposal does not meet any of the criteria in Policy OC1, and based on an initial desktop analysis Local Plans are of the view that the proposal has an unacceptable impact on the appearance and character of the area. However, the impact on the landscape will need to be scrutinised more thoroughly by the case officer, following a site visit, in coming to a conclusion on whether the proposal meets the aims of Policy OC1.

Regeneration and Housing (received 01/05/17):

The current 5 pitch site has been in existence since 2005 and registered as a Caravan Club site. Over the 12 years, it appears to have built up a positive reputation and maintain high repeat visits. This has now led to the increased demand from non-caravan club members wanting to stay at the site and the need for additional pitches.

Whilst the application does not support the creation of any additional jobs, the increased number of overnight staying visitors will generate greater spend within the local economy. This application is therefore supported.

Urban Design and Landscape Officer (received 03/03/17):

I'm presuming the area you're referring to is the bit to the south east of the site (i.e. to the south east of the existing field boundary that separates the larger field from the ponds). In this case then I'd have concerns regarding this part of the development; it's directly adjacent to a PRow running through the field, and looks like it might quite visibly encroach into a well-defined series of large open agricultural fields.

Environmental Health (no comments received: expired 09/03/17)

County Planning (received 01/03/17):

The application site is not within a Mineral Safeguarding Area as defined in the Minerals Local Plan for Staffordshire (2015 - 2030) and the site is not affected by any permissions or allocations for mineral working.

Therefore, in accordance with the powers contained in the 'Scheme of Delegation to Officers', this letter confirms that Staffordshire County Council, acting as the Mineral Planning Authority, has NO OBJECTION to the application for a touring caravan park and winter storage facility at Wyndford Mill Farm, Great Chatwell, Newport.

County Highways (received 03/03/17): no objection.

County Ecology (received 18/04/17): no objection

Staffordshire Badger Conservation Society (received 06/04/17): no objection.

Natural England (received 13/04/17): no comments.

Ramblers (received 08/03/17): no objection.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (no comments received: expired 09/03/17)

Campaign to Protect Rural England (no comments received: expired 09/03/17)

Open Spaces Society (no comments received: expired 09/03/17)

4.1 Representations

4.1.1 No letters of objection received (expired 09/03/17)

4.2 Site notice posted (expired 10/03/17) and newspaper advert published (expired 04/03/17).

5. APPRAISAL

5.1 The application has been presented to Planning Committee because it is contrary to policy EV2.

5.2 Key Issues:

- Principle of development
- Sustainable tourism
- Landscape
- Ecology
- Design and layout
- Highways and access
- Impact on neighbouring dwellings
- Representations

5.3 Principle of development

- 5.3.1 The site is within the Open Countryside and policy OC1 seeks to protect this area for its own sake; particularly for its landscape, ecological, historic, archaeological, agricultural and recreational value.
- 5.3.2 Policy OC1 reflects our Green Belt policy in terms of the types of development that would be acceptable, and considers the change of use of land being acceptable where:

"...the making of a material change of use of land, where the works or use proposed would have no material effect on the appearance and character of the Open Countryside beyond the Green Belt."

- 5.3.3 In determining the impact upon the Open Countryside the characteristics as defined in the para 5.3.1 are the material considerations in the planning balance. The landscape and ecological values of the site has been addressed in paras 5.5 and 5.6 respectively; with the historic, archaeological and recreational value assessed below.
- 5.3.4 The site is not within an identified Historic Landscape Area as defined in policy EQ4 and as greenfield land it is unlikely to have, nor has been previously identified to have, archaeological significance. The site has current recreational value as part of the Caravan Club License and this application is seeking to enhance this value by providing more pitches.
- 5.3.5 Core Policy 2 seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land and in the West Midlands Agricultural Land Classification the site is identified as Grade 3 – Good to Moderate. The change of use of the land would not lead to the long-term loss of this site from agriculture because the caravans are portable; and considering its relatively small size (in farming terms) it would not detrimentally impact upon farming provision in the locale or upon the District as a whole.

5.4 Sustainable tourism

- 5.4.1 Policy EV2 supports the growth of tourism. Facilities outside the development boundary will need to be supported by a business case that identifies how the development will support and make a sustainable contribution to the local economy. The provision of tourist accommodation, including the location of touring and static caravans, will be permitted if it does not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area.
- 5.4.2 As part of the application a Sustainable Tourism statement was provided. Although this statement does not expand upon the business case for the proposal, it does highlights that the site has successfully operating since 2005 and attracts tourists from

Scotland, Cornwall and from European countries; providing valuable amenity for the District's tourist industry. The site is also within reach of local attractions including Weston Part, Ironbridge and Cosford Aero museum.

- 5.4.3 It is further stated that although the site has no further potential for employment, during the course of visitors' stay local pubs, garages and shops are utilised, thus contributing to the local economy and helping to maintain local employment.
- 5.4.4 Although no formal business case has been provided, the site has been in operation since 2005 under the Caravan Club Licence and this proposal seeks to expand upon this by providing extra pitches. Therefore, in this instance, it is considered that a formal business case is not necessary because the Sustainable Tourism statement highlights the beneficial impact it currently makes on local businesses, making a sustainable contribution to the local economy. The Council's Regeneration team supports the application and considered there would be a beneficial impact on the local economy (refer to Section 4).

5.5 Landscape

- 5.5.1 Policy EQ4 seeks to maintain the rural character and local distinctiveness of the District. There is a public footpath (0.837) that runs from east to west and follows the southern boundary of the site before moving northwards at a distance of approximately 80m from the site boundary. There is also a public right-of-way (0.838) to the southwest of the site approximately 165m away from the site boundary.
- 5.5.2 When walking along the public footpath the first caravan storage area and the recreational area is well screened by a mature hedgerow where views of the caravans are restricted. Also, where this footpath moves in a northern direction visibility of the site is also screened by a mature hedgerow and this also screens views from the public right-of-way. It is therefore considered there would be no visible encroachment from the public footpath and the public right-of-way.
- 5.5.3 From the surrounding road network views of the site are largely screened by the existing vegetation on the site and also by the vegetation that grows along country lanes. This screening does not afford wider views of the site and therefore it does not form part of the wider landscape. It is considered that the proposal would not detrimentally impact upon rural character or upon local distinctiveness, complying with policies OC1 and EQ4.
- 5.5.4 It should be noted that the second storage area (refer to para 1.1.2) would not be acceptable in planning terms; hence why it was omitted from the new plans. Our Urban Design and Landscape Officer had concerns over this element because it was next to the

public right-of-way and would visibly encroach into a well-defined series of large open agricultural fields (refer to Section 4).

- 5.5.5 If this application is approved, it does not grant consent for the second storage area. Therefore this area will need to be cleared; otherwise the Planning Enforcement team would get involved.

5.6 Ecology

- 5.6.1 Policy EQ1 will support development that does not cause significant harm to habitats of nature conservation, together with species that are protected or under threat.
- 5.6.2 The County Ecologist, Staffordshire Badger Conservation Society and Natural England were all consulted as part of the application. None of the consultees raised any objections to the proposal. It is therefore considered there would be no detrimental harm caused to protected species complying with policies OC1 and EQ1.

5.7 Design and layout

- 5.7.1 Policy EQ11 seeks high quality design and EQ12 encourages the landscaping of new development. There is an existing ablutions block on the site and no further permanent structures are proposed. The caravans are of, and will be of, standard appearance; and their layout amongst the existing pitches as part of the Caravan Club License is considered acceptable.
- 5.7.2 The layout of the winter storage area, where it is well screened by mature vegetation, is also considered acceptable, and no additional planting is deemed necessary; complying with policies EQ11 and EQ12.

5.8 Highways and access

- 5.8.1 Policy EV11 seeks the provision of sustainable forms of transport to access sites. This includes footpaths and cycleways, which is particularly important for this site as it is in a rural location where patrons would want to explore the local area.
- 5.8.2 The site is adjacent to a public footpath and there is also a public right-of-way nearby. These afford opportunities for patrons to explore the local area either by foot or by bicycle; complying with EV11.
- 5.8.3 County Highways raised no objection to the proposal and it is therefore considered that there would be no detrimental harm caused upon highway safety.

5.9 Impact on neighbouring dwellings

- 5.9.1 Policy EQ9 seeks to protect the amenity of nearby residents, including any detrimental impact from noise and disturbance.

5.9.2 The site benefits mature hedgerows that largely surround it and the nearest residential dwelling, The Shippon, is sited over 130m to the southwest. Considering the screening around the site and the distance to the nearest neighbouring dwelling, it is considered there would be no adverse impact upon the amenity of nearby residents by way of noise and disturbance; complying with EQ9.

5.9.3 To ensure no detrimental impact is caused upon neighbouring amenity, a no open fire and lighting condition has been imposed.

5.10 Representations

5.10.1 None.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The proposal comprises the change of use to a recreational caravan site and an area for winter caravan storage. The site is within the Open Countryside and changes of use of land are permissible where there is no material effect on appearance or character. The site is well screened by mature vegetation and would not cause detrimental harm on the wider landscape; therefore not having a material effect upon appearance and character. Other considerations pertinent to the Open Countryside such as ecology, historic, archaeological, agricultural and recreational value have also been taken into account and deemed acceptable.

6.1.1 The proposal would have a beneficial impact on the local economy, be sited close to public footpaths and rights-of-way and not cause highway danger. The amenity of nearby residents has been taken into account and the application is recommended for approval; complying with policies OC1, EQ1, EQ4, EQ9, EQ11, EQ12 and EV11 of the adopted Core Strategy.

7. RECOMMENDATION APPROVE

Subject to the following condition(s):

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings:

Location Plan on single A4 sheet
MV/17/02 A
MV/17/03 A

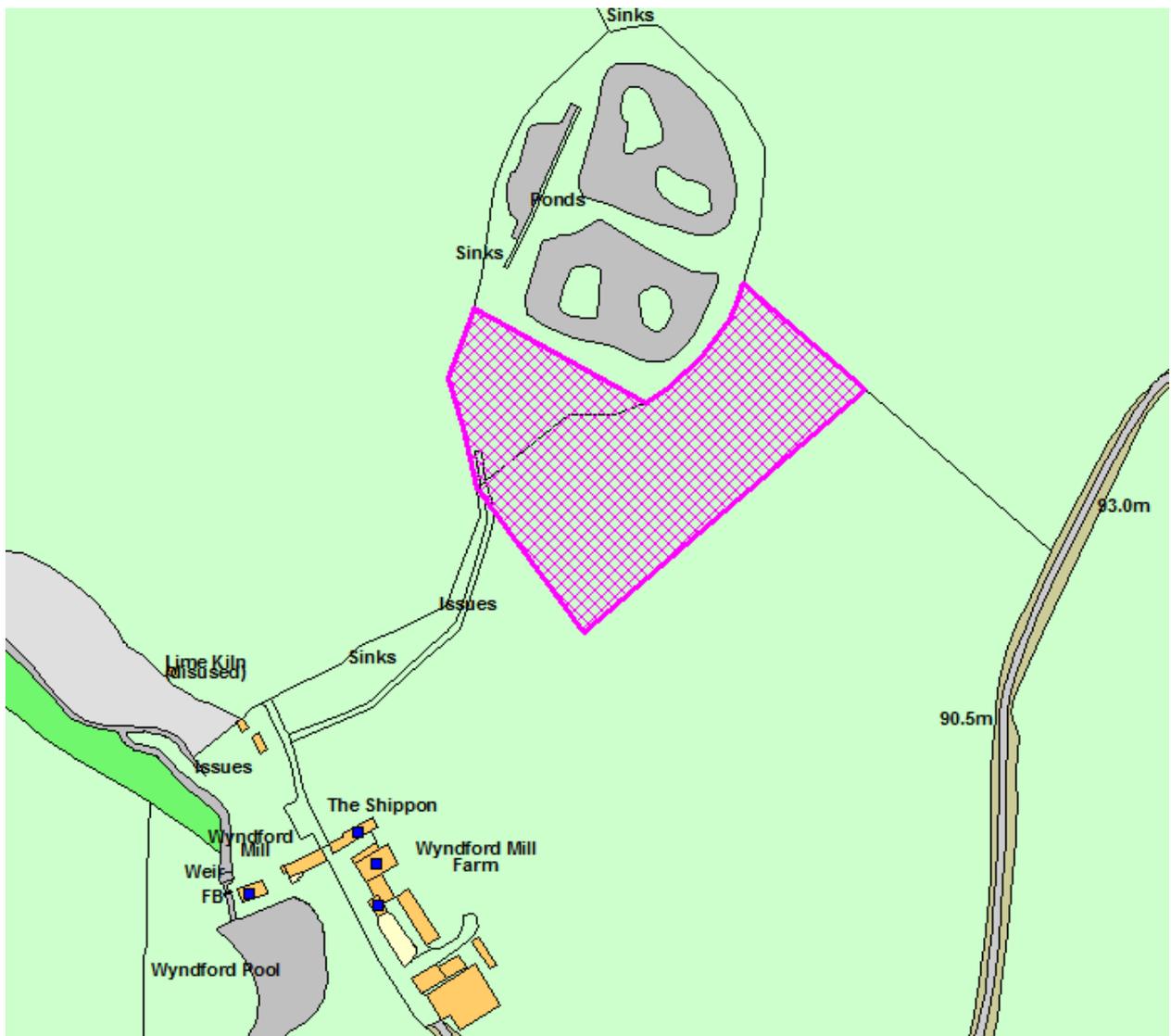
3. Visiting caravans (rather than those being stored in the winter) shall remain on site for no-longer than a maximum period of seven days per calendar month.
4. The area of land used for winter caravan storage, as highlighted on the approved plans, shall not operate between the months of May to September. Between these months the area shall remain free from the stationing of caravans. No other land on the site shall be used for caravan storage.
5. No existing trees, shrubs or hedges on the site or its boundaries shall be lopped, topped or cut down without the prior consent of the Local Planning Authority. If any existing trees, shrubs or hedges are cut down or die, they shall be replaced with the same species (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority) within the next available planting season and shall be maintained to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.
6. No open fires are to be permitted on the site.
7. The permission hereby granted does not grant or imply consent for the installation of any means of lighting on the site or the building. If any lighting is proposed to the building, roadways and parking areas details shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme. Additional lighting or alterations to the approved scheme shall not be carried out other than with the written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons

1. The reason for the imposition of these time limits is to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. In order to define the permission and to avoid doubt.
3. To protect the amenity of the area in accordance with policy EQ11 of the adopted Core Strategy.
4. To protect the amenity of the area in accordance with policies OC1 and EQ11 of the adopted Core Strategy.
5. To safeguard the amenity of the area in accordance with policies EQ11 and EQ12 of the adopted Core Strategy.
6. To protect the amenity of the area in accordance with policy EQ9 of the adopted Core Strategy.
7. To safeguard the amenity of the area in accordance with policy EQ9 of the adopted Core Strategy.

8. Pro-active Statement

In dealing with the planning application the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner by agreeing amendments to the application and in accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.



Wyndford Mill Farm, Great Chatwell, Newport, South Staffordshire TF10 9BJ