

Application for Determination

Parishes:	Trowse-w-Newton	
Reference:	BA/2015/0223/FUL	Target Date: 13 October 2015
Location:	Whitlingham Lane, Trowse With Newton	
Proposal:	Application for permanent change of use of land to campsite following existing temporary consent BA/2012/0338/CU which expires in March 2016. Consent to include erection of replacement washroom, managers dwelling, four tree sheds and various camping structures and associated infrastructure.	
Applicant:	Whitlingham Broad Campsite	
Recommendation:	Approve with conditions	

1 Description of Site and Proposal

- 1.1 The site is located at the western end of Whitlingham Country Park some 1 kilometre to the east of Trowse village. It forms part of a larger former gravel extraction area. The site also lies within a larger area which formed Crown Point Gardens (a Grade II Listed Park and Garden).
- 1.2 In March 2013 temporary planning permission was granted for the use of the site as a campsite (initial permission was granted for a three year period). The permission included the provision of a number of temporary buildings associated with the campsite use. In March 2014 a further consent was granted for a number of minor changes including an increase in the area of the campsite using a strip of land abutting its western boundary, provision of additional facilities and changes to ancillary structure at the camp site (based on operational reasons following the first year of activities).
- 1.3 The camp site now extends to some 1.97ha on the south side of Whitlingham Lane opposite Whitlingham Barn / Visitor Centre. The existing site consists of two reinstated grassed areas, one fronting Whitlingham Lane (to the west of a car / coach parking area) and a second area set back further to the south of the existing Broads Authority store / workshop. The site is substantially screened by a 1.8 metre high bund which fronts Whitlingham Lane (which screens in part the car parking area)
- 1.4 The current camp site with temporary planning permission offers:
 - A campsite offering 60 camping pitches for tents and campervans (no

- caravans) and up to 9 bell tent /shepherd hut pitches
 - Ancillary facilities including reception and associated structures, store and cycle store buildings plus a toilet and shower block (these are concentrated immediately south of existing Broads Authority work store)
 - A static caravan for on-site managers' accommodation (adjacent to the ancillary facilities)
 - Car parking in two locations; on the lower camping field cars park with each pitch and for campers using the upper (southern) field parking is provided on an area of the adjacent overflow car park
- 1.5 This planning application has been submitted in the third year of operation and seeks permanent planning permission for the following:
- The use of the site for camping pitches on the two field
 - Provision of 7 bell tents (March to October inclusive)
 - Provision of 4 shepherd huts (including 2 additional huts)
 - Provision of 2 yurts (including 1 additional yurt)
 - Retention of existing reception/ stores
 - Secure storage container
 - New cycle store / storage building (to match reception)
 - Replacement of existing temporary washroom with new purpose build facility
 - Erection of four new tree shacks in the wooden slopes to the south of the existing camping fields
 - New managers dwelling to replace temporary static caravan facility (approved as temporary accommodation when business was established)
- 1.6 The application has been accompanied by a suite of supporting documents including:
- Design and Access Statement
 - Planning Statement
 - Flood risk Statement (although the site location in flood zone 1)
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 - Ecological Report
 - Financial Assessment
- 1.7 The camp site has now operated for two full seasons which has allowed accounts and associated financial information to be submitted (on a confidential basis) to demonstrate the financial standing of the business.
- 1.8 The two main changes from the current temporary camp site facilities relate to the following:
- Introduction of new tree shacks in the wooded slopes to the south of the main camping fields
 - The provision of a new managers dwelling, to the south east of the camping fields in a partially screened / wooded area to replace the existing temporary caravan

- 1.9 In terms of design, both the proposed tree shacks and managers dwelling are proposed to use materials that will integrate well into the wooded setting, including the use of timber and corrugated sheeted roof. The supporting Design and Access Statement outlines that these are devised with a simple form, referencing the functional character and grouping of farm and utility buildings.
- 1.10 Following receipt of the application, the applicant has provided further information regarding landscaping and phasing including that the works are proposed to be phased as follows:
- Phase 1 – New washrooms, container, etc
 - Phase 2 – New yurt and bell tent structures
 - Phase 3 – New managers dwelling
 - Phase 4 – New tree shacks
- 1.11 In addition, following concern expressed by consultees, the applicant has supplied additional drainage details and a Heritage Statement.

2 Site History

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| 2.1 | BA2012/0338/CU | Change of use application for use of two fields as touring campsite for a temporary period of three years | Approved
March 2013 |
| | BA2014/0012/CU | Change of use of private amenity land to provide one 'yurt' camping pitch and two relocated bell tent pitches; relocation of existing bell tent pitches; erection of storage shed; provision of pedestrian bridge over existing culvert; construction of open sided lean-to as cover to outside wash-up area; retrospective consent for construction of lean-to store in service yard and timber walkway and deck to access manager's accommodation. All of the above for a temporary period until 25 March 2016 to accord with existing consent 2012/0338/CU | Approved
March 2014 |
- 2.2 Prior to these two consents, various permissions were granted for sand and gravel extraction during the 1990's. In 2010, planning permission was granted on land abutting the camp site for change of use to enable the provision of car and bus park to serve the wider Whitlingham Country Park (reference BA/2010/0129/FUL).

3 Consultations

3.1 The following comments have been received from consultees:

Trowse-w-Newton Parish Council – Awaited.

Broads Society – No objections.

NCC Highways – The site is located off the public highway and it is noted that the parking provision for the development will be on the existing car park or the camping field. The existing access to the site affords appropriate visibility to Whitlingham Lane and is of acceptable standard. Accordingly in highway terms only I have no objection to the proposal or wish to restrict the grant of permission.

Environment Agency – We wish to raise a holding objection because there is inadequate information regarding foul water disposal for the development; and as such the proposed development would pose an unacceptable risk of pollution to surface water and ground water quality. *(NB. The further views of the Environment Agency are awaited on the additional drainage details supplied).*

NCC Historic Environment Service – The development is situated within Crown Point park which is Grade II designated, therefore Historic England should be consulted prior to determination of the planning application. The proposed ground disturbance for the development is not extensive and is partly within a previously quarried area, therefore the impact on any below ground heritage assets is thought to be minimal. Providing Historic England have no objections we have no further comment to make and will not be requesting any archaeological conditions.

South Norfolk Council Environmental Health Officer – Awaited.

Historic England – We recommend that you seek further information before determining the application. At present we do not consider that sufficient evidence has been provided to understand the impact of the proposal on the significance of any heritage assets and their setting. We would request further supporting information to contain a Heritage Statement to meet the requirements of paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). *(NB. The further views of the Historic England are awaited on the additional Heritage Statement details supplied).*

4 Representations

4.1 Whitlingham Charitable Trust - The Trust are supportive of the application. The proposal fits the ethos of Whitlingham Country Park, that of quiet enjoyment. The temporary campsite had been very successful and there had been no adverse impacts on users of the Park. Two benefits to the Trust are highlighted if permanent change of use of land were granted:

- The residential dwelling and continued campsite activities would help continue the welcome extra security provided by having such a presence close by to the Park 24 hours a day.
- The Trust would continue to benefit from extra parking income from use of the car park facilities by clients of the campsite.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1 The following policies have been assessed for consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and have been found to be consistent and can therefore be afforded full weight in the consideration and determination of this application.

Broads Core Strategy

[Core Strategy \(Adopted Sept 2007\).pdf](#)

Policy CS1 – Landscape protection and enhancement

Policy CS5 – Historic and cultural environments

Policy CS9 – Sustainable tourism

Policy CS11 – Sustainable tourism

Policy CS12 – Sustainable tourism

Broads Development Management Policies DPD

[DMP DPD - Adoption version.pdf](#)

Policy DP4 – Design

- 5.2 The following policies have been assessed for consistency with the NPPF and have been found to lack full consistency with the NPPF and therefore those aspects of the NPPF may need to be given some weight in the consideration and determination of this application.

Broads Development Management Policies DPD

Policy DP5 - Historic environment

Policy DP14 – General location of sustainable tourism and recreation development

Policy DP15 – Holiday accommodation

- 5.3 The following policy has been assessed for consistency with the NPPF and found in part to be inconsistent with the NPPF so care is needed in applying this policy and where weight can be given.

Broads Development Management Policies DPD

Policy CS19 – Rural sustainability.

- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>

represents a material consideration in determining applications. It highlights a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In relation to this application, the provisions of paragraph 28 are particularly relevant and support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

NPPF

6 Assessment

6.1 The grant of the temporary consent in 2013 established that in principle the use could be accommodated and effectively enabled a three year period for its impact to be assessed. The application has been submitted towards the end of its third season and allowed for two full seasons of accounts to be considered.

6.2 In view of site specific factors, planning policy considerations and the experience of the operation of the temporary permission, it is considered that the key issues relate to

- Continuing suitability for camp site use / facilities proposed
- Visual impact / design
- Justification for on-site dwelling
- Access and parking
- Heritage
- Drainage

6.3 Continuing suitability to accommodate the camp site / facilities proposed

6.3.1 The site occupies a location outside any settlement boundary in an area designated as countryside. As such, normal restraint policy applies and development is strictly controlled. Notwithstanding this, policy at all levels continues to seek to support sustainable tourism in the countryside, (as detailed in the provisions of the Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Strategy for the Broads, development plan policy and NPPF provisions).

6.3.2 The thrust of the sustainable tourism strategy has not changed since the initial temporary consent. It still seeks to provide accommodation at a suitable scale and in appropriate locations. This is highlighted in development plan policy in Policy CS9, which supports diversification of tourism where economically and environmentally sustainable. Furthermore the strategy established a need to adopt a proactive approach to shaping accommodation provision including small scale camping sites.

6.3.3 The camp site currently extends to 1.97ha and provide 60 pitches (and bell tents, shepherd huts and yurt). This scale of camp site, although not small, is not considered inappropriate in this location as it is at the edge of the well-established country park. This also offers good access to the facilities

provided at Whitlingham (and also close by in Trowse village and Norwich).

6.3.4 Policy DP14 highlights new tourism developments (such as camp sites) can be permitted where they are closely associated with existing tourism sites. The county park is an important countryside destination for local residents and has facilities that attract visitors from outside the area. Therefore it is considered that it represents a 'tourism site' location which would be suitable to accommodate a camp site. It should also be noted that Whitlingham Charitable Trust see benefits from the campsite use and are supportive of the application.

6.3.5 With regard to the extent of facilities proposed, Development plan policy DP14 is important. It seeks to limit new build associated with the tourism developments in the countryside. In this case, the continuing nature of the use as a camp site (with tents, campervans and a small number of bell tents and their platforms) will provide limited permanent buildings. Even with the introduction of the four new tree sheds on the existing wooden slope, this will still ensure a very limited and acceptable impact in the area. In addition, it is considered that the extent of ancillary facilities now proposed for the camp site (reception, stores, new washroom, etc) represent a reasonable level of such facilities for this scale of campsite. The existing consent has enabled impact on landscape and residential amenity to be properly assessed and it is considered that the use has led to no unacceptable impact on residential or visual amenity (also explored further in section 6.2). Therefore, it is considered that the proposed extent of 'new build' / facilities on the site is acceptable and consistent with the aims of Policy DP14.

6.3.6 Based on the above, it is considered that the provision of a permanent consent for a camp site of a scale envisaged is acceptable in this location, and is consistent with the aims of development plan policies, including CS9, CS11 and CS12, plus DP14, DP15 and NPPF advice, notably that contained in paragraph 28.

6.4 Visual impact and design

6.4.1 The site is adjacent to a car park on a site formerly used for gravel extraction. As such the character and appearance of the area has changed significantly over the last 10 years. The application site consists mainly of two reinstated grassed areas, part of which is on rising land (in the south east part of the site) but is substantially screened by a 1.8 metre high bund which fronts Whitlingham Lane. This limits significantly the impact of tents and associated vehicles on the camp site from the main through route into the country park.

6.4.2 In the country park landscape, there will be views into the site (especially in periods when the trees close to the site are not in leaf). However, this will mainly be at periods when the site has a lower level of occupation. At other times tents and camper vans will be seen in a well screened landscape with trees to the south, west and east of the site limiting impact and provide a

green backcloth to the site. Also at busy times for the country park, tents, campervans and associated cars will be sited in an area where cars and coaches will already be parked close by.

- 6.4.3 The siting of the ancillary buildings linked to the camp site use remain close to the existing Broads store building. This Broads building has a functional appearance and the original washroom granted consent for the campsite had a similar appearance. The design of the reception, stores and proposed new washroom seek to reflect a less functional appearance introducing a timber boarded appearance and sheeted roof, reflecting the more traditional form of single storey building associated with the area and is more appropriate for a permanent built form. Members should note that in granting temporary planning permission in 2013, the Committee report highlighted the need for any future permanent buildings to be provided to deliver an improve appearance and it is considered the proposals submitted fully meets this approach. It is considered that the appearance, form and proportions of the proposed ancillary buildings are acceptable and will deliver an enhanced design linked to any permanent consent.
- 6.4.4 In view of the wooded setting of the site, the application for a permanent camp site use is informed by an Arboricultural report which includes a woodland management plan and proposals for additional planting proposals to enhance the appearance and setting of the site. Whilst proposals will involve the removal of some existing vegetation, notably to accommodate the proposed tree shacks and new dwelling, this removal is in heavily wooded areas. It is considered that the overall approach to new planting linked on the campsite plus wider woodland management will maintain the character of the area. Within the camp site itself, this includes new hedging, wild flower and tree planting. Overall it is considered that these proposals will improve the natural appearance of the site, plus help maintain and enhance ecological interest and address the aspirations of development plan policy CS1.
- 6.4.5 In terms of design, both new managers' accommodation and tree houses / shack structures have been formulated to respect the rural site context. As outlined in the supporting Design and Access Statement, the scheme has been 'devised with a simple form, referencing the functional character and grouping of farm and utility buildings'.
- 6.4.6 In respect of the managers dwelling, the proposed siting differs from the temporary caravan (which is sited to the rear of the reception / washroom). The proposed siting is set back from the main camp site and will be substantially screened by existing trees / semi mature landscape belt resulting in glimpsed views to the proposed two storey built form. Whilst this is further from the reception, it is still close by and offers an acceptable level of proximity and surveillance and the proposed siting therefore is considered appropriate for a new dwelling. The design is welcomed and it is considered that it will offer a contemporary appearance rather than a typically domestic one which is considered appropriate in this location. Both the new tree shacks and managers dwelling are proposed to use materials

that have been selected to integrate well into the wooded setting, including the use of timber and corrugated sheeted roof. It is considered that this design approach is appropriate for the setting and meets the key design tests of development plan policy DC4.

- 6.4.7 In terms of other structures, experience has demonstrated that the impact of the bell tents, yurts and shepherds huts is limited, especially as bell tents will only be erected between March and October (when the camp site is at its busiest).
- 6.4.8 In view of the above, it is considered that the visual impact from the application proposal will not unacceptably impact on the landscape character or scenic beauty of the area and the design approach for new structures and the dwelling is acceptable consistent with the aims of policy CS1 and policy DP4.

6.5 Justification for on-site dwelling

- 6.5.1 In planning policy terms, residential accommodation in the countryside has to meet strict tests. The NPPF highlights that Local Planning Authorities should avoid new isolated residential units in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as 'the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside'. Broads development plan Policy DP26 outlined the tests as:

- There is a demonstrated need for a full time worker for the enterprise to function properly
- Evidence has been submitted to demonstrate the business has been established for three years, has been profitable for one and is financially sound and has a clear prospect of remaining so
- The functional need cannot be met by an existing dwelling on the site or in a nearby settlement
- The dwelling would be commensurate in size and scale with the needs of the enterprise
- It would not adversely affect protected species or habitats

- 6.5.2 In 2013, the need for on-site accommodation was accepted based on an all year round need to deliver a good level of service for campers (including for early or later arrivals); to meet health and safety requirements / emergency contact and offer a level of security for visitors. In granting temporary consent it was considered the key tests for temporary accommodation were met and it was recognised that there was a functional need for on-site accommodation linked to the proper operation and management of the business. However as a new business, it was not appropriate to permit a permanent dwelling unless it was proved that the business had properly established on sound financial basis and there was a long term need for such accommodation.

- 6.5.3 It is considered that the function need for a full time worker remains established. Therefore the key test involves financial considerations. To

enable the financial standing of the business to be assessed, the application has been supported by financial information which has been independently assessed (in part against the projected growth / profitability which was advanced when the application was initially submitted). In this case, it has been concluded that Whitlingham Broad Campsite has traded successfully since May 2013 and based upon the evidence submitted and further detail provided by the applicants, the business is viable, profitable and financially sound.

- 6.5.4 With a dwelling in the countryside based on the business / operational use, it is important to ensure that the scale of dwelling is not excessive and commensurate with the requirements of the business and its financial standing. In this case the scale of dwelling (three bedroom) is considered reasonable with a modest floor area (some 110 sq m), not excessive for the needs of the business for on site management and is supported by the scale of income that will be derived by the business.
- 6.5.5 The application is supported by an Ecology Report that concludes that the site has low ecological / habitat value and the proposal will have a neutral impact (with some opportunity for ecological enhancement). This includes the area proposed to site the new dwelling.
- 6.5.6 In view of the above, it is considered that the proposed dwelling is justified based on the needs of the business and meets the test of policy DP26 and is consistent with the provisions of the NPPF advice.

6.6 Access, parking and servicing

- 6.6.1 The campsite offers good links to the county park and services and facilities in Trowse village (and Norwich). It is sited to offer good accessibility to walkers and cyclist including those using the long distance Wherryman Way footpath and the national cycle route which passes through the country park. This makes the site well placed to attract non car borne visitors. As part of the facilities on site, secure cycle storage is to be provided. In addition, it is recognised that the site is not a significant distance from either bus routes or Norwich Rail Station. Therefore the site meets the key accessibility test of Policy CS19 and NPPF advice to provide facilities without reliance of private motor vehicles. However it would be naive not to recognise that the good road access available and the proximity to car parking will make the site potentially attractive to campers arriving by car or using campervans.
- 6.6.2 It is considered that the site represents a suitably accessible location meeting the tests of development plan policy, notably Policy DP11. In addition its position at the western end of the County Park should ensure vehicle movements along Whitlingham Lane to the east will limit any increase in car movements along the quieter part of Whitlingham Lane.

6.7 Heritage

- 6.7.1 The application site falls within a Listed Grade II Gardens. Historic England raised initial objection based on the lack of assessment of impact on heritage assets. This has been addressed in the Heritage Statement now submitted with the application. Whilst the further views of Historic England are awaited (and will be reported verbally to Members). It is considered that the nature of the use and the siting of the additional facilities within the area of previously disturbed land on the former quarry site may have a limited impact on the setting of the Park and Garden. However the modest scale of development in the context of the whole of the designated asset and the benefit of increased public access to enjoy the significance of the Park and Garden mitigate this less than substantial harm. Therefore on balance the scheme is considered acceptable in terms of the impact on Heritage when considered against the relevant criteria in the NPPF and Policy DP5.

6.8 Drainage

- 6.8.1 The site lies outside any high flood risk area. Notwithstanding this, concern has been raised by the Environment Agency and a holding objection received. However the applicant has responded to address the foul and surface water issues raised outlining a new gravity fed system is to be used. Whilst formal response is awaited from the Environment Agency, informal discussions have suggested thus objection will be withdrawn. Members will be formally updated at the meeting. no objections are anticipated

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The temporary planning permission granted in March 2013 has enabled the camp site business to develop. It is considered that the supporting information has demonstrated the camp site use has been successfully established without unacceptable impact on amenity.
- 7.2 The design of permanent built form proposed, including the managers' dwellings, represents an appropriate quality of design, sympathetic in this setting. The business is successfully established and the nature of the business does justify permanent accommodation linked to the campsite use.
- 7.3 Subject to the imposition of planning conditions, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable and consist with the thrust of development plan policy.

8 Recommendation

8.1 Subject to no additional representation/comment being raised permanent planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions:

- (i) Permanent consent
- (ii) Amended plans
- (iii) Access from Whitlingham Lane only
- (iv) External finishes / detailing of on-site facilities to be agreed
- (v) External finishes / detailing of dwelling / tree sheds to be agreed
- (vi) Landscaping / surfacing
- (vii) Restriction on occupation of accommodation to site employee / manager
- (viii) External lighting
- (ix) Ecological protection (inc timing of works outside nesting / breeding season)
- (x) Location of bell tents and yurts
- (xi) Foul drainage details
- (xii) Maximum of 60 pitches for tents or camper vans (no touring caravans) + no additional bell tents, yurts and shepherd huts without a further consent.

Background Papers: Planning File BA2015/0223/FUL

Author: Andy Scales
Date of report: 21 September 2015

Appendices APPENDIX 1 - Location Plan

APPENDIX 1

BA/2015/0223/FUL Whitlingham Broad Campsite, Whitlingham Lane, Trowse with Newton

