

Application for Determination

Parishes:	Trowse-w-Newton
Reference:	BA 2012/0338/CU Target Date: 22 January 2013
Location:	Whitlingham Lane, Trowse With Newton
Proposal:	Change of use application for use of two fields as touring campsite for a temporary period of three years
Applicant:	Ms Linda Robey
Recommendation:	Temporary permission with conditions
Reason referred to Committee:	Major application and applicant connected to Broads Authority member of staff

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. The site extends to some 1.57ha on the south side of Whitlingham Lane opposite Whitlingham Barn / Visitor Centre. The site mainly comprises of two parcels of land, one fronting Whitlingham Lane (to the west of the overflow / coach parking area) and a second area set back further to the south of an existing Broads Authority store / workshop (see location plan – Appendix 1).

1.2 The application proposes the following:

- A campsite offering 60 camping pitches and up to 8 seasonal bell tent pitches (pitches are proposed to be grass and the site will cater for tents and camper vans - no caravans).
- Ancillary facilities to comprise a reception and cycle store building, a toilet block and a shower block (to be located immediately south of existing Broads Authority work store).
- The reception and store building of 6m x 3m, single storey, dark stained timber boarded with a corrugated sheet roof.
- The toilet and shower blocks provided by two jackleg, flat roof cabin units 6m x 2.5m (offering six toilets and six shower cubicles), both blocks connected to mains sewerage.
- Bell tents to sit on simple timber platforms – with a height of 3.2 metres to their ‘tops’ (the bell tents will be on site from March through to October - over the winter period the tents will be taken down and stored).

- A static caravan to provide onsite managers' accommodation.
- The site to be left to grass, with a long/short mowing regime to delineate the pitches and access paths within the fields.
- Access to the site via Whittingham Lane and through the country park overflow car park.
- Car parking to be provided in two locations. On the lower camping field cars will be parked on the field, with each pitch allowing sufficient space for car and tent. No vehicles will be parked on the upper (southern) field, with parking provided on a small area of the overflow car park.

- 1.3 The applicant has explained that initially planning consent is sought for a temporary three year period. This reflects the fact that the landowner (Crown Point Estate) is in the process of consulting on a masterplan for the wider Whittingham Country Park site and adjoining land. Whilst the applicants indicate that the masterplan is likely to include a campsite, they accept that it is not yet certain that the site will be in the same position as this proposed campsite. As a result, facilities block and reception buildings are proposed that are capable of being moved / removed to fit within any masterplan vision. It is anticipated that once the masterplan is completed and any permanent location for the campsite identified, planning consent for a permanent campsite will be sought. The applicant has explained that the application for a permanent campsite would include replacing the facilities cabins with a permanent facilities block housed within an appropriately designed building.
- 1.4 The applicant has supplied details of their financial business cases on a confidential basis. This provides costs and income assumptions (including set up costs) for the three year period. The applicants' submitted figures suggest that profit should start to be achieved in year two. The applicant has also highlighted that a three year consent will allow them sufficient time to prove the viability of the enterprise, in accordance with Broads development plan policy.
- 1.5 Subject to consent being granted, the use is proposed to commence and the campsite open in 2013.

2 Site History

- 2.1 Various consents were granted in the Whittingham area for sand and gravel extraction during the 1990's. This included consents covering this planning application site (which was a site most recently operated by Lafarge Aggregates).
- 2.2 In 2010, planning permission was granted on land abutting the application site (under reference BA/2010/0129/FUL) for change of use to enable the provision of car and bus parking and access to the wider Whittingham Country Park. This consent has now been implemented.

3 Consultations

3.1 The following comments have been received from consultees

Trowse –w- Newton Parish Council – Recommends approval subject to the conditions that access is restricted to Whitlingham Lane only and that the manager’s accommodation on site is in keeping with the application

Broads Society – No objection.

NCC Highways – No objection.

Environment Agency – No objection provided that the following condition is appended to any permission granted:

If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation strategy to the local planning authority detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with and obtained written approval from the local planning authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

NCC Historic Environment Service – Based on currently available information the proposal does not have any implications for the historic environment and we would not make any recommendations for archaeological work.

South Norfolk Council Environmental Health Officer – Comment awaited on land contamination considerations. However it has been noted that a Caravan Site Licence will be required if the site is to be used by motorised camper vans.

4 Representations

4.1 None received.

5 Planning Policy

5.1 Broads Core Strategy

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

Policy CS1 – Landscape protection and enhancement

Policy CS9 – Sustainable tourism

Policy CS11 – Sustainable tourism

Policy CS12 – Sustainable tourism

Policy CS19 – Rural sustainability.

5.2 **Broads Development Management Policies DPD**

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

Policy DP4 - Design

Policy DP11 – Access to Land

Policy DP14 – General location of sustainable tourism and recreation development

Policy DP15 – Holiday accommodation

Policy DP26 – Permanent and temporary dwellings for agricultural, forestry and other workers.

5.3 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 the following paragraphs are relevant.

Para 28 - support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations.

Para 55 - new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided 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.

Para 109 - highlights the planning system should protect and enhance valued landscape.

Para 115 - recognises great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the Broads.

6 **Assessment**

6.1 In view of the site specific and the planning policy considerations, it is considered that the key issues relate to the suitability of the site / location to accommodate the camp site proposed; visual impact and design; access and car parking; and the suitability of the site to accommodate a permanent caravan to be occupied all year associated with the proposed camp site use.

6.2 *Suitability to accommodate the camp site*

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 seeks 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).

The thrust of the sustainable tourism strategy is to seek 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.

The proposed camp site extends to 1.57ha and seeks to provide 60 pitches (and eight bell tents). This scale of camp site, although not small, is not considered excessive 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 closes by in Trowse village).

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 suitable 'tourism site' location which would be suitable, in principle, to accommodate a camp site.

Development plan policy, notably DP14, seeks to limit new build associated with the tourism developments in the countryside. In this case, the nature of the use as a camp site (with tents, campers and a small number of dismountable bell tents and their platforms) will provide no permanent buildings and therefore impact will be limited. In addition, it is considered that the extent of ancillary facilities required for the camp site (reception, store, toilets and showers) represent the minimum level of such facilities that would normally be required. As these are only sought for a temporary three year period in this form and the proposed siting of these facilities limits visual impact to an acceptable extent (as discussed further in section 6.11), it is considered that the proposed extent of 'new build' / facilities on the site is acceptable and consistent with the aims of Policy DP14.

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

6.3 *Visual impact and design*

The proposed site is adjacent to the recently constructed overflow car park on the site of former gravel extraction. As such the character and appearance of the area has changed significantly. The proposed application site consists mainly of two reinstated grassed areas, part of which is on rising land (in the south east part of the site). However, the site is substantially screened by a 1.8 metre high bund which fronts Whitlingham Lane (which screens in part the overflow car parking area) and this will therefore limit significantly the impact of tents and associated vehicles on the camp site from the main through into the country park.

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 low or no 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 times, tents, campervans and associated cars will be sited in an area where cars and coaches may already be parked close by.

In terms of structures, it is considered that the main impact on the site will be from the eight bell tents proposed which will be a permanent feature on the site between March and October (with their height up to 3.2 metres). However, it is considered that by the careful siting of these, impact will be limited.

The applicant has highlighted that the siting of the temporary buildings have been devised to limit visual impact. These are proposed close to the existing Broads store building. This building has a functional appearance and represents the only building currently on the site. The proposed design of the reception, toilet and shower block (plus manager's caravan) will also have a very functional appearance, in keeping with the Broads building. New buildings of this form and appearance would not normally meet the design tests for new permanent buildings in a sensitive location. However, in this case the ancillary buildings are proposed for a temporary three year period and sought to limit up front investment whilst the business establishes. As they are proposed to be sited in very close proximity to the Broads building, it is considered in this case that the structures, if coloured in a suitably recessive colour, would not be unacceptable for a temporary period.

The applicant has been unable to provide any details of the appearance of the caravan / mobile home and indicated investment in such accommodation can only take place with the certainty of a planning consent. This view is not considered unreasonable and if consent for a caravan for accommodation for the site manager is justified, it would be reasonable in this case to control the size and final appearance by planning condition. This would be based on the proposed siting shown on the submitted plan and the scale of investment shown to be made on this item in the submitted business case.

In view of the above, it is considered that the visual impact from the proposal will not unacceptably impact on the landscape character or scenic beauty of the area, consistent with the aims of Policy CS1. In addition, whilst the design approach to ancillary buildings would not be acceptable for permanent facilities on the site (or consistent with Policy DP4), as the proposal is for temporary facilities to allow the business to establish, it is considered acceptable as it will help deliver a sustainable form of tourism to serve the Broads.

6.4 *Access, parking and servicing*

The applicant highlights that the siting has been devised to offer good links to the county park and services and facilities in Trowse village (and Norwich). It has been sited to offer good accessibility to walkers and cyclist including those using the long distance Wherryman Way footpath and the national cycle route which pass through the country park. This makes the site well

placed to attract non car borne visitors. 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 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.

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.

6.5 *Suitability of the site to accommodate a caravan permanently occupied*

It is considered that the scale and location of the proposed site (with its associated facilities) meets the thrust of sustainable tourism development plan policy and the grant of a temporary consent is justified to limit up front cost in relation to ancillary facilities (reception, shower, toilets and stores) until the viability of the business has been properly established. However residential accommodation is normally only permitted as an exception to normal restraint policy in the countryside where a number of tests have been met (as detailed in development plan Policy DP26). These are:

- Residential occupation would be for a period of up to three years.
- There is clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis.
- The functional need cannot be met by an existing dwelling on the site or in a nearby settlement.
- In relation to temporary mobile homes, the proposed temporary dwelling would not be located in Flood Risk Zone 3.

The key tests of this policy in this case relate to functional and financial considerations as the application is for a three year temporary consent and the site lies outside flood zone 3.

The applicant has submitted a business case. This has been independently reviewed. The business case suggests profit will be made in years two and three of the enterprise (with set up costs effectively covered in year one) and the independent review of this concluded that over a three year period there is strong potential for the business to be established as financially viable. It is considered that the business is planned on a reasonable financial basis and as such the temporary accommodation can be justified on this ground, provided the functional need is demonstrated.

The applicant has detailed a functional need for caravan / static accommodation on the site all year round. During the main period of operation (effectively from March to October), the applicant has put forward justification based on delivering 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. Outside this period, it is suggested that occupation is still required for security purposes and to limit the risk of vandalism.

Many camp sites have on site accommodation (and equally some sites operate without any 24 hour presence). However based on the lack of affordable accommodation close by, and to help to the business establish in its infancy (linked to other temporary facilities), it is considered that the occupation of a caravan on the site from March to October is justified. However the security reason justification for all year round occupation is not justified. It is considered that the site can be made secure without the need occupation of the mobile home during winter months. Therefore, it is considered that a condition should be imposed to limit occupancy to the period of March to 31 October each year.

It should be stressed that the grant of permission for temporary managers accommodation should not be seen as a precedent for permanent accommodation linked to any future site. In any future full (non time restricted) consent, permanent buildings will need to be provided to accommodate ancillary facilities (rather than the temporary buildings which are not considered of a sufficiently high standard for a permanent feature in a sensitive location). These can be designed to provide a high level of security. In addition other measures can be provided that may remove the need for permanent on site accommodation. These factors will need to be carefully assessed in any future planning application.

In conclusion in relation to this application (notwithstanding the above future considerations) it is considered that a temporary caravan to provide managers accommodation to support the business (occupied from March to October each year) is justified and meets the test of policy DP26 and is consistent with the provisions of the NPPF advice.

6.6 *Other considerations*

Concern has been raised by the Environment Agency associated with possible on site contamination. It is considered however with the imposition of the suggested planning condition, this concern can be addressed.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 It is considered that the proposal is consistent with the thrust of development plan policy and other sustainable tourism initiatives. The scale and the nature of the camp site (and ancillary facilities) proposed appear acceptable and its development for a three year period will not unacceptably impact on the landscape setting or the visual amenities of the area or country park. Whilst the design of buildings do not meet the usual high standard which would normally be sought, it is considered in view of the temporary nature of the consent, and their siting close to an existing Broads Authority building with its functional appearance), this is acceptable whilst the business seeks to prove its viability. Subject to the imposition of planning conditions, including restricting occupation of the managers caravan, 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, a three year temporary planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions.:

- Three year temporary consent.
- Amended plans.
- Access from Whitlingham Lane only.
- Details of mobile accommodation / caravan to be agreed.
- External finishes of on-site facilities to be agreed.
- Bell tents to be removed between 1 March and 31 October each year.
- Land contamination.
- No use prior to on site car parking.
- Siting of bell tents to be agreed.
- Maximum of 60 pitches (for tents or camper vans) and 8 bell tents (no touring caravans).

8.2 The following informative be specified on the decision notice of the planning application:

- A Caravan Site Licence will be required if the site is to be used by motorised camper vans

9 Reasons for Approval

9.1 It is considered that the proposal is consistent with the thrust of development plan policy and other sustainable tourism initiatives. The location, scale and the nature of the camp site (and ancillary facilities) appear acceptable its development for a three year trial period is considered that consistent with the provisions of development plan policies CP9, CP11, CP12, DP14 and DP15 plus NPPF advice.

9.2 It is considered that the proposed camp site will offer good accessibility to all and is well placed for use by walkers and cyclists. Therefore it is considered that the proposal is consistent with the provisions of policies CS19 and DP11.

9.3 The siting of the camp site is sensitive to the landscape setting and is screened in part by bunding and seen against a green backcloth. Therefore it is considered that the visual impact from the proposal will not unacceptably impact on the landscape character or scenic beauty of the area, consistent with the aims of Policy CS1. In addition as the proposal is for temporary facilities to allow the business to establish and will help deliver a sustainable form of tourism to serve the Broads. As a result, the siting and functional design of ancillary buildings is acceptable and not unacceptably in conflict with the aims of development plan policy.

9.4 The provision of temporary accommodation to support the business is justified by the financial and functional considerations, subject to a restriction in the period where occupancy is justified. This approach is consistent with the provisions of Policy DP26 and NPPF advice.

Based on these factors, it is considered that the scheme meets the thrust of development plan provisions, most notably policies CS1, CS9, DP14 DP15 and DP26 and the advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Background Papers: Application file BA/2012/0338/CU

Author: Andy Scales
Date of Report: 10 December 2012

Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – Location Plan (accompanying the application submission)

APPENDIX 1

