

Application for Determination

Parish	Hoveton		
Reference	BA/2012/0038/FUL	Target date	27 March 2012
Location	Bewilderwood, Horning Road, Hoveton		
Proposal	Amendments to planning conditions included in PP 2005/1568/PF along with improvements to existing maintenance base, establishment of a new community education project including two mobile classrooms and new compound to front of site.		
Applicant	Mr Tom Blofeld		
Recommendation	Approve subject to conditions		
Reason for referral to Committee	Objections received		

Description of Site

- 1.1 The application site is Bewilderwood, an outdoor adventure and education park covering approximately 22.5 hectares of land, largely woodland and water bodies, between Horning Road and Long Lane in Hoveton. The park has been open since 2007 and has become a well-attended family attraction in the Broads.
- 1.2 The site is accessed from Horning Road and there is a large car park at the front of the site for visitors and staff. A site office has recently been erected at the northern boundary of the car park (BA/2011/0067/FUL).
- 1.3 To the north, the site extends up to Long Lane which runs roughly parallel with Horning Road from Stalham Road to the west (north of Hoveton) and which to the west of Bewilderwood meets the junction with Letheringtons Lane that runs south to connect with Horning Road. Long Lane is a narrow single track road with few formal passing places and there is a weight restriction on a bridge to the west of the junction with Letheringtons Lane.
- 1.4 The park's activities are concentrated at the centre of the site within and around the woodland and waterways. A formerly agricultural field between the mature woodland and Long Lane was planted with new trees when the park was opened. There is a clearing around an emergency access from Long Lane in the northeast corner of the site.

- 1.5 The application seeks to make amendments to the conditions on the original planning permission for the park (BA/2005/1570/HISTAP) and seeks to regularise developments which are not in accordance with this permission. The proposed variations to the original planning conditions are as follows:
- Condition 14 prevents the use of any equipment to amplify, reproduce or play sound on the site, unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority. The proposal seeks to allow the use of amplified sound between 10:00 and 17:00, at a restricted level that could not be audible at, or beyond, the site boundaries.
 - Condition 15 prohibits the use of any generators and compressors on the site and it is proposed to be varied to regularise and allow the use of one portable diesel powered generator (capacity 4.5kVA) and two 90 litre air compressors.
 - Condition 17 restricts any external lighting to the catering and toilet areas. The application seeks to vary this to include the installation of 13 halogen lights under the eaves of the shop, two wall-mounted lights on the shop adjacent to a boat jetty and one light on the new site office.
 - Condition 27 restricted use of the entrance on Long Lane to emergency vehicles only. This entrance has, however, come to be used for operational purposes, waste collection and deliveries in breach of this condition. This condition is proposed to be varied to allow use of the Long Lane access for a maximum of 12 bark chip and large timber deliveries per annum.
 - The proposals also require an amendment to the details agreed under condition 4 of the permission regarding waste collection which is now proposed to be undertaken on a weekly and fortnightly basis from the Horning Road entrance.
- 1.6 The application also seeks to regularise and revise a maintenance base which has become established at the rear of the site, adjacent to the Long Lane access. This currently comprises of a fenced enclosure with storage and maintenance facilities. Materials, waste bins and skips are stored in open areas around this base. The application seeks to revise and formalise these facilities, including the addition of new fencing, enclosed storage areas, landscaping and three additional storage containers. The waste skips would be removed from this area.
- 1.7 Adjacent to the maintenance base, a portable building which provides a staff cabin, and does not have the benefit of planning permission, is proposed to be removed. This would be replaced by a permanent building providing staff facilities, a first aid room and toilets. It would measure 17.2 metres by 3.4 metres and be sited in the southeast corner of this open area, adjacent to the woodland. It would have a low mono-pitch felt covered roof with a ridge height of 3.3 metres and would be clad in timber. An access ramp would run along the west elevation providing level access to the toilets.

- 1.8 To the north of the maintenance base, adjacent to the Long Lane boundary, four allotment plots and two portable buildings are proposed in association with a community education project providing a vocational programme for local 14-16 year olds based on preparing, cultivating and managing a market garden. Within the public area of the park a show garden is proposed. The buildings would be in the northeast corner of the site and would be clad in timber, they would provide classroom and tool storage space. Additional landscaping along the northern boundary is proposed. It is anticipated this project would generate one additional traffic movement per day, using the Horning Road entrance, with a maximum of 15 pupils in attendance at anytime, on two days of the week in the first year, increasing to four in the second year. The project will be provided and run by a separate organisation.
- 1.9 In order to facilitate the use and storage of materials and goods in the maintenance base without using the direct access from Long Lane that is not appropriate for such use, a new internal service track is proposed. All regular deliveries and waste collections would use the Horning Road access and a new storage base is proposed in the northwest corner of the car park. Goods and materials would then be transported by Bewilderwood's own vehicles from this storage base to the maintenance base at the rear using an access track across the field to the west, along Palmers Lane northwards and then along an existing route through the maturing trees to the north of the woodland and then parallel with Long Lane inside the site boundary.
- 1.10 This track is proposed to be surfaced with Type 1 material. Palmers Lane itself is a restricted byway which Bewilderwood, as land owners, have a private right to use with vehicles. The boundary of the Broads Authority's Executive Area runs along the eastern side of this lane, so the lane itself is within North Norfolk District Council's planning area. The 500 metres length of track parallel with Long Lane is proposed to be made a permissive footpath for use by the public.
- 1.11 The storage base at the front of the site would be located in the northwest corner of the existing car park area. It would consist of a fenced compound on a levelled base within which three waste skips would be stored and a storage building is proposed. The building would measure 12 metres by 7.4 metres with a dual-pitched roof at a ridge height of 3.9 metres and an open-sided lean-to on the east elevation measuring 5 metres by 5 metres. This building would be clad in timber with a cedar shingle roof. Landscaping, including tree and hedge planting, is proposed to the north and east of the compound and the existing hedgeline along the western car park boundary is proposed to be reinforced.
- 1.12 A Schedule of Works outlining the proposed order and timing of works has been submitted. The work to facilitate the use of the internal track is prioritised but additional uses of the Long Lane access are identified to implement the proposed developments.

2 Site History

In 2006 planning permission was granted for the use of land for an outdoor adventure and education park (BA/2005/1570/HISTAP).

Condition 12 of the 2006 permission was varied in 2007 to extend the dates that the park could open on (BA/2007/0246/COND).

In 2009 planning permission was granted for an extension to the existing shop and jetty within the park (BA/2009/0250/FUL)

In 2010 planning permission was granted, varying the conditions restricting the dates that the park could open to allow opening all year round (BA/2010/0034/COND).

An application to erect a new office to the rear of BeWilderwood with new parking spaces and variation of condition 27 of PP BA/2005/1570/HISTAP to allow access from Long Lane was submitted in December 2010 but withdrawn in March 2011 (BA/2010/0414/FUL).

A proposal for a site office at the rear of the existing car park was approved in March 2011 (BA/2011/0067/FUL) and has been completed.

3 Consultation

Broads Society – No objections.

Wroxham Parish Council – No objections.

Hoveton Parish Council – No comments.

Horning Parish Council – No response.

District Member – Raised concerns about visibility of proposals from Long Lane and impact on amenity of users and residents, difference between public expectations of park when proposed to how it operates now, breach of existing planning conditions and appropriateness of proposed location of education project.

North Norfolk District Council Environmental Protection – No objection to proposals, recommended conditions in respect of sound amplification, generators and compressors, lighting and deliveries.

Norfolk County Council Countryside Access Officer – No objection to private right to use track, suggest warning signs are erected for drivers and public.

Norfolk County Council as Highways Authority – No objection, subject to conditions regarding completion of internal access and compounds prior to commencement of uses and revised condition in respect of use of Long Lane allowing a maximum of 12 deliveries per annum.

4 Representations

- 4.1 Five representations received concerned about the planning breaches that have occurred and the impact of the proposals in terms of traffic, highway safety, amenity and visual impact. One representation includes support for the principle of the proposed education project.

5 Policies

5.1 Broads Core Strategy adopted September 2007

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

CS1 – Landscape
CS11 – Sustainable Tourism
CS16 – Access and Transportation
CS18 – Rural Sustainability.

5.2 Development Management Policies DPD adopted November 2011

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

DP2 – Landscape and Trees
DP4 – Design
DP11 – Access on Land
DP27 – Visitor and Community Facilities and Services
DP28 – Amenity.

6 Assessment

- 6.1 The application seeks to regularise existing unauthorised developments and uses as well as new development to facilitate an access solution and establish an education project. The situation regarding the existing unauthorised developments and uses is regrettable; however the application represents the result of discussions between officers and the applicants to find an appropriate long-term solution that meets the operational needs of the park within the constraints of the local area.
- 6.2 The Authority's policies are generally supportive of tourism development, subject to the impact on the local community and environment and it is recognised that in this case the local road network and amenities of neighbouring occupiers are sensitive to additional development. The National Planning Policy Framework is also supportive of sustainable rural tourism development that benefits rural businesses, communities and visitors and respects the character of the countryside. In principle, the proposed development to support the existing tourism operation is acceptable and it is noted that Policy DP27 states that facilities which are educational in nature will be supported. The key considerations in the determination of this application are the impacts of the proposals on highways, amenities, landscape and trees. The design, scale, form and materials of the proposals also require consideration.

6.3 Highways

Planning permission was granted for the park subject to a condition preventing any traffic, except emergency vehicles, accessing the site from Long Lane as this a narrow, rural lane with no formal passing places and a weight restricted bridge to the east of the site. It is therefore not suitable for servicing this development, but has come to be used for deliveries, maintenance and waste collection and this situation is unacceptable.

6.4 The proposed solution is to create an internal access track to allow all but a limited number of large deliveries to use the Horning Road access. Whilst, as result of the proposals, the traffic using the Horning Road entrance would increase above existing levels, it would be in line with the originally anticipated operation of the park and the Highways Authority have no objection to this.

6.5 Prior to the establishment of the park, the site was part of an agricultural operation accessed from Long Lane. The proposed maximum number of 12 deliveries a year from Long Lane is considered to be akin to the former agricultural use and thus not create additional traffic on Long Lane. There has been concern that the presence of the maintenance base, storage facilities and education project adjacent to Long Lane may continue to attract traffic on to Long Lane. However, the Highways Authority are satisfied that the proposed internal track and storage compound at the front of the site would negate any need to use this route.

6.6 In principle, the creation of an internal service track to support the operation of the park is considered to be acceptable. The route would utilise part of Palmers Lane which only Bewilderwood as land owners have a right to use with vehicles. Norfolk County Council as the body which administers Public Rights of Way has no objection to the exercising of this private right, subject to appropriate warning signs, details of which have been submitted. The points where the track would enter and leave the Lane are not visible from either Horning Road or Long Lane, and therefore it is not considered that the use of a section of the Lane would encourage the public to use it with vehicles (which would be illegal). The creation of a new permissive path for the public is welcomed.

6.7 The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in respect of its impact on the highway and public rights of way network and highway safety and can be considered to be in accordance with Policy DP11 of the Development Management Policies DPD.

6.8 Amenity

The proposed storage compound at the front of the site is contained within the existing car park area and the track from this compound onto Palmers Lane would be at a significant distance from any neighbouring dwellings. It is not considered that the level of activity generated by this compound and track would adversely affect the amenity of adjoining occupiers or the amenity of users of Palmers Lane.

- 6.9 The original permission for the park did not include any development to the north of the woodland. The development of a maintenance base here without the benefit of planning permission is regrettable, however it is recognised that there is an operational need for a compound and that this is the most suitable location from an operational perspective. The application proposes rationalising and consolidating the existing development, providing additional staff facilities and locating the education project in this area. There are isolated dwellings along Long Lane and the nearest is over 300 metres from the proposed developments. The use of the maintenance base would largely be for storage and it is not considered that the associated activities, or use of the internal track running parallel with Long Lane to access this base, would result in any unacceptable impacts on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.
- 6.10 The proposed education project would be sited nearest to the road. This would involve a maximum of 15 teenage pupils at any one time and only during school term times, when the park is less busy. It is not considered that the garden related education activities would generate any significant level of activity that would result in unacceptable impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers and it is not considered that the siting of the project in this area of the park is unacceptable.
- 6.11 The use of amplified sound is proposed at a level that could not be audible at the site boundaries. Given that the original permission prevented any amplified sound to protect the amenity of residents and the character of the countryside, the use of amplification only at a volume which cannot be heard outside the site is not considered unacceptable. Using audibility at the sites boundaries as a control also allows self-regulation of the volume by staff.
- 6.12 Generators and compressors were not permitted for the same reasons as amplified sound on the original permission. Permission is sought for one generator and two compressors and this is not considered unreasonable to facilitate the operation of features of the park and maintenance equipment. The Environmental Protection Officer has no objection to the amplified sound, generator or compressors and it is not considered that appropriate variation of the existing conditions to allow limited use of such equipment would result in any unacceptable impacts on residential amenities.
- 6.13 External lighting is currently limited to the catering and toilet areas which are well within the woodland. Permission is sought for external lighting on the shop and jetty which are also largely concealed within the site and it is not considered that this lighting would result in any unacceptable impacts outside the site. The office is in a more exposed location at the northern edge of the car park, but the contours of the car park screen it from views outside the site and all lights are proposed to be on timer or motion sensor controls. Subject to a condition requiring agreement on any further external lighting within the park, the variation of condition to allow this lighting is considered to be acceptable.

6.14 Landscape and Design

The design, scale, form and materials of the proposed new buildings are considered to be appropriate to their function and siting. In its current condition, the appearance of the maintenance base is not considered to be appropriate to its setting. The removal of the existing portable staff building, rationalisation of the layout and increased height of the fencing are welcomed, as is the hedging and tree planting around the front and rear compounds which will soften their impact. The portable buildings for the education project are proposed to be clad in timber which would result in similar appearance to the permanent and bespoke staff building, and this is considered appropriate.

- 6.15 The proposed track from the storage compound in the car park area to Palmers Lane would cross a currently open, agricultural field but would follow existing boundaries as far as possible and be bordered by a new hedge. From Palmers Lane to the maintenance base at the rear it would utilise an existing informal route through the maturing trees and parallel with Long Lane. Gaps in the existing hedge along Long Lane are proposed to be filled to reinforce this boundary and the surface of the track would be level with the adjacent ground to minimise its impact.

- 6.16 The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of their design and landscape impact. It is noted that in the proposed Schedule of Works, the improvement works to the maintenance base are planned for June-July 2012 and this prioritisation is welcomed.

6.17 Trees

An Arboricultural Assessment is awaited but it is anticipated that subject to the findings of this and any appropriate conditions, the proposals would not result in any significant adverse impacts on trees.

- 6.18 A new pumping station is proposed and this is considered to be of an appropriate specification. It is considered necessary to condition that this is installed prior to the first use of the new staff building that it would serve.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The application proposes amendments to the existing permission for the park to regularise the uses and developments which have occurred since the park opened and its operations have become established. The partly retrospective nature of the application is regrettable, however it is recognised that the application proposes regularising the unauthorised uses and developments in a way which would improve their appearance and impacts and the application is considered to represent a long-term solution to meet the operational needs of the park in an appropriate manner.

- 7.2 It is recognised that the conditions that this application seeks to vary were imposed largely to protect the amenities of the local community and countryside and to allow the park to operate within the constraints of the local

area. Although the application proposes a number of variations to these conditions, it is considered that the objectives of these conditions would still be upheld and that neither individually or cumulatively the proposed amendments and new developments would result in unacceptable impacts on amenities or the local area.

- 7.3 The proposal to provide facilities for a local vocational education project is welcomed and supports the original objectives of providing an education and adventure park.
- 7.4 It is considered that the application can be recommended for approval subject to the conditions indicated below, the details and precise wording of which are to be finalised with the relevant consultees and the applicant.

8 Recommendation

8.1 Approve subject to conditions:

- Standard time limit.
- In accordance with submitted plans.
- In accordance with submitted Schedule of Works.
- Any equipment, machinery or instrument for the amplification, reproduction or playing of sound or music shall only be used on the site between the hours of 10:00 and 17:00 and at a level which is not audible at or beyond the site boundaries.
- No generators or compressors shall be used on the site at anytime, other than one 4.5kVA capacity generator and two 90 litre air compressors, without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.
- Any lighting on the site shall be confined to the catering and toilet areas, shop, jetty and office in accordance with the approved plans.
- No access or egress to or from Long Lane other than by emergency vehicles and a maximum of 12 deliveries per annum.
- Prior to the first use of Palmers Lane by servicing vehicles, warning signs shall be erected as agreed with the Local Planning Authority.
- All waste is to be collected from the site via the Horning Road entrance only.
- Any new tree or shrub which within 5 years of planting, dies, is removed, or becomes diseased shall be replaced.
- Prior to the first use of the new staff building, the proposed pumping station shall be installed in accordance with approved details .
- Tree protection measures.

9 Reason for Recommendation

- 9.1 The proposal is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policies DP2, DP4, DP11, DP27 and DP28 of the adopted Development Management Policies DPD (2011), Policies CS1, CS11, CS16 and CS18 of the adopted Core Strategy (2007) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Background papers: Application File BA/2012/0038/FUL

Author: Maria Hammond

Date of Report: 11 May 2012

List of Appendices: APPENDIX 1 Location Plan

APPENDIX 1

BA/2012/0038/FUL – Bewilderwood, Horning Road, Hoveton
Restoration of spit using newly created reed bed

