
7. FULL APPLICATION – CHANGE OF USE TO FIELD NO.S 8485 AND 8877 TO A SEASONAL OVERFLOW CAMPING FIELD AT KNOTLOW FARM, FLAGG, (NP/DDD/0216/0085, P7457, 04/07/2016/ALN)

APPLICANT: MRS M HOLLINRAKE

Background

This application for the change of use of an agricultural field to a seasonal overflow camping field was originally considered at the meeting of the Authority's Planning Committee in April 2016. Notwithstanding an officer recommendation of refusal, the decision was deferred pending appraisal of the availability of alternative areas of land in the applicant's control where an overflow site might be more appropriately sited. Members also requested further details of when the site would be used and precise details of numbers if the site proposed in the original submission was going to be pursued along with the financial details of the farming and camp site operations to better understand the need for the site. Members had concerns regarding the use of the upper part of the field as it was exposed and visible from the surrounding area and the lower part of the field was liable to flooding. The original committee report is included as an Appendix to this report for information and the reasons for the recommendation of refusal in the original report were as follows:

- **The use of the application site for camping would, both individually and when taken cumulatively with the existing camping and caravanning use on the farmstead, be harmful to the established landscape character of the area and would prejudice the quiet enjoyment of the National Park contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, RT1 and RT3.**

Subsequently officers have re-visited the site to investigate whether a suitable alternative area of land can be identified that has less significant landscape impact. In addition, the agent has provided additional information with regard to the business operations and employment, site operations and management and landscaping. An amended plan has been received which shows the more elevated area to the north west of the field omitted and fenced off from the remaining application site and the area to the south west of the access track, which is in Flood zone 3, also excluded and fenced off.

Discussion

Alternative Sites

Knotlow farm is located within a shallow dry limestone valley and, being located in the 'valley bottom' the application site, other than the elevated piece of land at the northern end of the site, is largely flat and this, together with the proximity to the access track makes it a suitable site for camping, from a practical and commercial point of view. Other agricultural land in the applicant's ownership that does not already have approval for a camping use is either on the more steeply sloping valley sides or, beyond that, is more elevated and remote from the farmstead and therefore open to view from surrounding vantage points. In particular fields that lie to the south west of the existing overflow camping field are equally as prominent in views from the Limestone Way as the current application site. In conclusion, the applicant does not wish to consider an alternative site and officers do not consider that there is a piece of land where the landscape impact would be less severe.

Site usage

Members requested that details of when the site would be used and precise numbers of tents. No figures have been provided with regards to the use of the proposed site or specifically when it would be used. The submitted statement explains that the number of guests who stay at the site is weather dependant and fluctuates considerably year on year - the overflow field is intended to accommodate guests who want to come to the farm during busier times. The applicant is happy to accept a condition that limits use to between Easter and the end of October but would not want a restriction with regard to 'weekday' usage (as was applied to the other 'overflow' field approved in 2014). The statement also explains that the application site would, in addition to Duke of Edinburgh groups, also be used by 'family and friends' groups, walking groups and special needs groups (who often prefer privacy depending on the needs of their guests).

Financial details of the farming and camp site operations

Members requested financial details of the farming and camp site operations to better understand the need for the site. No financial information has been submitted with regard to the farming or the camping business. However a more general statement has been submitted which explains that until 2005 Knotlow Farm operated as dairy enterprise, at which time the applicants sold the herd and dairy equipment and sought diversification opportunities. From 2006, a previously small scale camping enterprise expanded to generate income to replace the dairy enterprise income. Farming is now on a smaller scale with around 40 pedigree dorper ewes plus lambs and 50 head of Aberdeen angus cattle. The applicant is seeking to expand both the beef herd and the sheep flock by breeding their own replacement females. It is stated that the farm partnership is reliant on the income sources from the camping and caravanning uses, bed and breakfast at the farmhouse, rental income from the yurts as well as the farm business income to sustain the family members employed in the business and the overhead costs at the farm.

Extent of Application Site

A revised plan has been submitted since the original committee meeting which shows the more elevated area to the north west of the field omitted and fenced off from the remaining application site and the area to the south west of the access track, which is in Flood zone 3, also excluded and fenced off.

Conclusions

Officers are satisfied that there is not a more appropriate site on the holding for the proposed use and as such a decision is required as to whether the currently proposed site, as amended would both individually and when taken cumulatively with the existing camping and caravanning use on the farmstead, be harmful to the established landscape character of the area and would prejudice the quiet enjoyment of the National Park contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, RT1 and RT3.

The omission of the more elevated area from the scheme is welcomed insofar as the wider landscape impact of the proposed use of the site will be mitigated as a result of the changes to the site area. However it remains that tents placed on the rest of the application site would be clearly and prominently visible from the Limestone Way, which runs through the site and the cumulative impact of a camping use over the fields approved in 2014 and the current site means that effectively a 0.6km stretch of the Limestone Way would be affected with views of tents and activities immediately adjacent to the footpath.

Whilst it is clear that the income from the additional camping use would benefit the farming enterprise, no specific financial evidence has been submitted to suggest, for example, that this additional income is required over and above the income from the existing camping and caravanning and bed and breakfast uses, in order to secure the long term viability of the agricultural business. In this respect, officers do not consider that it can be demonstrated that the benefits of granting planning permission for the overflow site offset or outweigh the harmful impacts of the extended site. Therefore, officers recommend that the application be refused for the following reasons:

- **The use of the application site for camping would, both individually and when taken cumulatively with the existing camping and caravanning use on the farmstead, be harmful to the established landscape character of the area and would prejudice the quiet enjoyment of the National Park contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, RT1 and RT3.**

However, without prejudice to this officer recommendation, should members wish to approve the application then officers would recommend the following suggested conditions:

1. Development not to be carried out otherwise than in accordance with amended plans.
2. Excluded areas on approved plans to be fenced off with post and rail fencing within 1 month of date of decision.
3. The camping site hereby permitted shall be ancillary to the agricultural use of Knotlow Farm and the agricultural unit and the camping site shall be maintained as a single planning unit throughout the lifetime of the development hereby permitted.
4. No single tent shall be retained on site for a consecutive period exceeding 28 days in any one calendar year.
5. No tent shall be occupied as a permanent residence.
6. No tents shall be allowed on the application site between 31st October in any one year and the Thursday before Good Friday or 31st March whichever comes first in the following year.
7. The use for camping hereby permitted shall be limited to weekends and Bank holidays only between the Thursday before Good Friday or 31st March (whichever comes sooner) and the 31st October in any one year.
8. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) no development required by the conditions of a site licence for the time being in force under the 1960 Act shall be carried out or erected on the site without the National Park Authority's prior written consent.
9. Landscaping shown on approved plan to be implemented within the next planting seasons following the date of the decision.
10. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) May 2014/Ambiental

Technical Solutions and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

- All tents to be located within Flood Zone 1 and outside of the area identified as being at high risk from surface water flooding.
- Identification and provision of safe routes into and out of the site to an appropriate safe haven.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the National Park Authority.