

9. SECTION 73 APPLICATION – VARIATION OF CONDITIONS 7, 8, 10, 12 and 14 ON NP/SM/0711/0677 TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TOTAL CARAVAN AND TENT PITCHES, EXTEND THE SEASON BY 2 MONTHS AND ALLOW FOR A WARDEN'S PITCH FOR 10 MONTHS, UPPER HURST FARM, HULME END, ALSTONEFIELD (NP/SM/0315/0267, P.5051, 411402 358954, 26/06/2015/KW)

APPLICANT: MISS SUE GREEN

Site and Surroundings

Upper Hurst Farm is located in open countryside approximately one kilometre to the south east of Hulme End. The property has around twelve hectares (30 acres) of land and was formerly a working dairy farm. The original farm house and associated stone built outbuildings lie adjacent to Beresford Lane about 500m south east of its junction with the B5054 Hartington-Warslow road. There is a group of modern farm buildings to the rear (east) of the farm house and associated stone built outbuildings. These buildings are not currently in use for agricultural purposes.

The application site is a camping and caravan site at Upper Hurst farm that lies to the south of the farm house. It comprises a field parcel about one hectare (2.5 acres) in area. The application site had formerly been in agricultural use and has the benefit of some mature planting along its southern and eastern boundaries and further planting has been carried out along these boundaries earlier this year.

The caravan site presently comprises 24 authorised caravan pitches laid out around the perimeter of the field and served by an access track which consist of two loops arranged in a figure of eight shape. The land enclosed by the upper (northern) loop is used as amenity land and the land enclosed by the lower (southern) loop is used for six tent pitches.

There is a utility building sited to the east of the existing farmhouse and associated buildings and at the northern end of the caravan and camping site, close to the existing entrance to the field. There is also a Public Right of Way that runs by the north field from Beresford Lane towards the neighbouring property, Lower Hurst Farm, and a Public Right of Way that runs by the application site again running from Beresford Lane towards Lower Hurst Farm.

Proposal

The proposed development comprises the following:

1. An increase in the present numbers of permitted touring caravans/tents from 24 caravans/6 tents to 25 caravans/15 tents. This proposal seeks retrospective approval for the additional caravan pitch, which is already in use on the site.
2. The extension to the operating season by two months. The current permitted season operates from 1st March – 31st October. The proposed extended season would operate from 1st February – 31st November.
3. Provision of a warden's caravan on site for the extended 10-month operating season.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED, subject to the following conditions:

Approved Plans

1. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the submitted plan no's 020/05 (Campsite Layout Plan), 020/01,02,03&04 (Landscaping Specifications), subject to the following conditions or modifications:

Landscaping

2. Any trees or plants which form part of the existing perimeter hedge/tree planting which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased within five years of the date of this permission shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species or in accordance with an alternative scheme previously agreed in writing by the National Park Authority.

Limitations on Use of Site

3. The proposed use of the site for touring caravans shall not take place other than within the area annotated as caravan pitches numbered C1 - C25 on the submitted plans and no other part of the land at Upper Hurst Farm within the applicant's ownership shall be used to site caravans.
4. The total number of caravans on the site at any one time shall not exceed 25.
5. No caravans shall be placed or retained anywhere on land within the applicant's ownership or control between 31st November in any one year and the 1st of February in the succeeding year.
6. Other than mobile recreational vehicles, no caravan or structure shall be placed anywhere within the red-edged application site which is not capable of being towed on a public highway by a private family car.
7. The warden's caravan shall not be occupied as a permanent residence and shall be removed from the site on or before 31st November in any one year and shall not be returned to its designated pitch hereby permitted until the 1st of February in the succeeding year.
8. No caravans on the annotated caravan pitches numbered 1-25 shall be occupied as a permanent or sole place of residence by any person at any time during the lifetime of the development hereby permitted.
8. The proposed use of the site for camping/siting of tents shall not take place other than within the areas numbered T1 – T15 on the submitted plans and no other part of the land at Upper Hurst Farm within the applicant's ownership shall be used to site tents/camping.
9. No tents shall be sited, placed or retained anywhere on land in the applicant's ownership between 31st November in any one year and the 1st of February in the succeeding year.
10. The total number of tents and caravans on the site at any one time shall not exceed 40.

Restrictions on Permitted Development Rights

11. **Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) no alterations to the external appearance of the utility building shall be carried out without the National Park Authority's prior written consent.**
12. **Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015 (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.**

Access

13. **The existing access from Beresford Lane to the camping and caravanning site at Upper Hurst Farm shall be maintained free of any obstruction to its designated use throughout the lifetime of the development hereby permitted.**

Key Issues

- (i) whether the principle and landscape impacts of the increase in the present numbers of caravan/tents from 24 caravans/6 tents to 25 caravans/15 tents + a warden's caravan, and the extension to the operating season by two months, meets the Authority's Core Strategy (CS) policy RT3 and Local Plan (LP) policies LR3 and LR5.
- (ii) whether the proposed warden's caravan is justified and complies with the Authority's CS policy RT3 and LP Recreation & Tourism policies, specifically LP policy LR3 (c) and Core strategy policy HC2 .
- (iii) the impact of the proposed increase in caravan/tent numbers, together with the extension of the operating season upon the ecological interests within the vicinity of the caravan site.
- (iv) the impact upon the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

History

The following planning applications are relevant to the current application:

May 2011 – Detailed planning consent granted for the change of use of the southern field to a caravan and camping site for a maximum of 10 caravans and 20 tents. The caravans were situated within the northern half of the field and the tents in the southern half of the field.

November 2011 - Detailed consent granted for the use of the field for no more than 24 caravan pitches and for a maximum of 30 tents and caravans at any one time. The approved scheme changed the layout of the caravan pitches, which were positioned around the perimeter of the field, but set back from boundaries to accommodate planting. Landscaping conditions were attached to the consent, which included the provision of a 3.65m (12feet) buffer zone along the eastern boundary of the application site, which borders a small plantation on land in separate ownership. The planting belts on the western and southern boundaries were narrowed to allow for the eastern buffer zone. This buffer zone was considered to be necessary to address concerns about the potential for disturbance of ground nesting birds (lapwings) on the adjacent site.

The access track serving the caravan pitches was set out to form loops, shaped broadly as a figure of eight. The inside of the northernmost and larger loop was to be left as an amenity area. The inside of the smaller and southernmost loop would be a grassed area providing pitches for six additional tents.

This application also proposed the erection of a utility building sited to the east of the existing farmhouse and associated buildings and at the northern end of the caravan and camping site, close to the existing entrance to the field.

September 2012 – A Section 73 application was granted to use this southern field for no more than 24 caravan pitches and for a maximum of 30 tents and caravans at any one time. This consent also granted retrospectively the retention of an amenity building and a raised platform.

This 2012 approval was subject to conditions requiring that there should be no use of the Upper Hurst farm site for camping and caravanning after 31 October 2012 until a revised planting scheme had been submitted and agreed. A further planning condition required that no use of the site at Upper Hurst farm for camping and caravanning should take place until the subsequent tree and shrub planting had been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

A landscaping/tree planting was subsequently implemented, but this failed. The caravan and camping site has continued to operate since 2012 without fully complying with the landscaping conditions, requiring that any trees/planting that subsequently failed be replaced with trees/plant species of a similar type and size. Further comprehensive tree planting has now recently been completed, however, which has been properly protected with fencing and tree/plant guards.

February 2012 – Discharge of condition application submitted in respect of all the conditions 1-27 attached to the November 2011 approval. This included the submission of a landscaping scheme, for which it was acknowledged that it was not in accordance with the landscaping condition, as the landscaping scheme was required to be submitted and agreed, and then implemented prior to the caravan site being brought into use. The discharge application was partly discharged, as some of the conditions could not be complied with until the completion of the development.

December 2012 – Discharge of condition 1 attached to the 2012 approval. This condition restricted use of the site from 31 October 2012 until full details of a revised planting scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Authority.

This discharge of condition application was supported by a planting scheme and proposed additional planting over and above that which had been carried out on site following the agreement of a landscaping scheme earlier that year. The application followed pre-application discussions with the Authority's Landscape Officer.

The additional planting included eleven standard Rowan trees (8 – 10cm girth), three planted along the bottom of the southern raised bank, five to be planted along the southern boundary (unevenly spaced) and three planted along the western boundary (unevenly spaced). Six Hawthorns (450mm to 600mm) were also proposed to be planted on the southern raised bank amongst the larger trees which have already been planted.

The officer's committee report stated that planting had been carried out in accordance with the agreed landscaping scheme, but that this was ineffective in terms of mitigating the impacts of a raised platform which had been created. The report noted that plants would need to reach 3 – 4m in height before they would adequately foil views of caravans and tents sited on the raised platform. The report concluded that a much more robust planting scheme involving planting mature trees would be needed to offer any effective screening for the site if the raised platform were to be retained.

Condition 1 was subsequently discharged, however, the applicant's attention was drawn to the requirement of condition 2 which prevented use of the site from March 2013 until the scheme of landscaping has been implemented.

March 2013 – Discharge of condition 2 in respect of the landscaping condition attached to the February 2012 approval. This confirmed that the planting had been carried out in accordance with the approved planting scheme and, consequently, there was no requirement to submit further details. However, the applicant's attention was drawn to the second part of Condition 2, which required any trees or plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased to be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.

Consultations

External Consultees

County Council (Highway Authority) – No objections.

District Council – No reply to date.

Natural England (NE) – The conditions which the applicant is seeking to vary relate to the number of pitches and an extension to the season of use. Although NE were not in a position to formally object to the original application their response raised concerns about the potential for disturbance to breeding waders using adjacent land as a result of the operation of the camp site.

However, at the time of the previous application for the relocation of the camp site to its present position, it was acknowledged that this would improve the situation, and remove the camping activities from the land closest, and most exposed to, the neighbouring landholding, for which payment through HLS was being made for habitat improvement to breeding waders.

NE also suggested at that time, that the caravan/camp site season should perhaps be limited, through the use of planning conditions, to exclude the bird breeding season as far as possible, so as to reduce the risk of disturbance to a minimum. However, no such conditions were applied to the eventual consent.

The details of the current proposed changes to the original planning conditions would not appear to impact upon the concerns raised in NE's previous response, in that the additional pitches will be contained within the existing perimeter caravan pitches, and the likelihood of additional disturbance risk is therefore negligible. The extension of use by 2 months (November and February) would not impact upon the bird breeding season, and so again there is unlikely to be any further impact upon any birds using the adjacent land. Consequently, NE do not wish to raise any concerns specifically in relation to the proposed variations to the conditions originally applied to the planning consent.

Parish Council - no objections and support the application. They would like to see the screening and planting growing up over the next few years - they appreciate that there have been issues with the first planting and hope very much that this will improve.

Internal Consultees

National Park Authority (Ecologist) - The application site is bordered by Lower Hurst Farm, which is in a Higher Level Stewardship scheme, principally to benefit breeding birds including lapwing, curlew and snipe. The application site currently already has 30 pitches in use on the field in question and it is proposed to have an additional 10 within the same field. There has previously been concern that any increase in noise and disturbance from an increased usage of the caravan site on Upper Hurst Farm may be detrimental to the breeding bird interest on Lower Hurst Farm.

Concerns relate to issues with disturbance and displacement of breeding waders which may result from increased noise on the caravan site and increased usage of the public footpath, which crosses both farms, by walkers and dog walkers.

However, it is recognised that a previous planning application removed the camping activities from the land closest, and most exposed to, the neighbouring landholding, for which payment through HLS was being made for habitat improvements for breeding waders. The field used for camping tends to be screened from fields known to have been used by waders on Lower Hurst farm by the lie of the land and hedgerows and shelter belts. Upper Hurst Farm has historically been used informally for pitching a small number of caravans.

Given the above it is considered that the proposal for an extra 10 tent pitches, and importantly contained within the same field, is unlikely to result in significant additional disturbance to breeding birds in adjacent fields. The extension period is otherwise outside the breeding bird season and therefore, these proposals do not give rise to any further concerns.

Representations

During the statutory consultation period, the Authority received letters from two local residents stating objections to the current proposals. They raise the following concerns:

- Hulme End already has well above capacity for caravan and tents sites; the hamlet has been absolutely overwhelmed by the development of these in the past 10 years.
- The application seeks to vary conditions on a 2012 consent which has yet to comply satisfactorily with conditions 1 and 2 of that consent in relation to screening described by the authority at the time as “going to the heart of the permission”
- Assurances were given by officers at the planning committee on 11 November 2015 that landscaping would screen the development from the surrounding roads. Three years late, this screening has failed to materialise and the site is an eyesore, which is out of place in the National Park.
- The responsibility for the lack of screening lies with the Planning Authority. If consent relies on screening conditions, these should be monitored and enforcement should be automatic and effective. Consequently, any enlargement of the caravan park would be wholly inappropriate.
- The proposed screening is deciduous and will be inadequate, given the 10 months operation. Local residents deserve tranquillity for some periods of the year.
- Local Plan policy RT4 indicates an upper limit of 30 caravans or tents.
- The development is now breaking the near skyline on its northern boundary, which defeats the case for the present location. There seems to be inadequate screening from the north side. The objector’s house lies over 2½ km north and the existing development can be seen from there as it lies on a hill and the screening does not work. This presents visual intrusion and is against Peak Park policy to preserve a tranquil landscape.
- Large modern tents are just as intrusive in the landscape and to neighbours as caravans.
- There has been no adequate justification for the extra pitch for a warden’s caravan.
- Encroachment into the adjacent field to the north as a recreational area (bonfires, football)

- Deterrent to lapwings nesting in adjacent fields.

The letters are available to view on the public file.

Main Policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies: DS1, GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, L2, RT3

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC2, LC4, LC17, LC21, LR3, LR5, LT18

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF with regard to the issues that are raised.

The following paragraphs, however, are of particular relevance to this proposal. Paragraph 14 states that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-making. Paragraph 17 states, amongst other things, that a set of 12 core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. Amongst these 12 core principles is that planning should seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Additionally planning should always take account of the different roles and character of different areas and, amongst other things, recognize the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and support thriving rural communities within it.

Paragraph 28 states, amongst other things, that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should, amongst other things, support sustainable rural tourism. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified need are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

Paragraph 113 relates to the protection of wildlife and biodiversity networks. This states, amongst other things, that LPA's should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national, and locally designated site, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks.

Paragraph 114 states that LPA's should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. Paragraph 115 states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important.

Paragraph 117 states, amongst other things, that to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity planning policies should, amongst other things, promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets.

Assessment

Introduction

The applicant's supporting statement states that her sole intention is to provide a viable use for the site. The caravan and camping site has now been operating for three years and in that time gross sales have increased by 33% and are expected to further increase this year. Gross sales could potentially be increased by a further 25% if planning consent is granted for the additional 10 pitches and the season is extended by 2 months. The applicant states that this increased income is important as it is intended to employ more staff to manage the site and as the site is shortly to become VAT registered.

The applicant considers that there is ample room to provide the additional pitches within the boundaries of the present site and factors such as density and spacing between caravans & tents, sanitary & sewage equipment and adequate play areas for children have all been considered and found to be wholly adequate.

The applicant states that the reason for the proposed extension of the season by two months (1st February – 31st November) is because there appears to be an exceptionally good demand for business in November (partly due to Halloween and bonfire night) and also for the half-term in February (partly due to the school half-term),

Due to the success of the caravan and camp site the applicant states that it has become increasingly necessary to employ more labour to properly manage the site. The site now generates work for at least two full-time persons (including the applicant) during the 10 month operating period and the applicant is also employing another person 1 day a week to assist with the accounts and running of the business so there is adequate cover. There are also additional bought-in services.

Issue 1 - Whether the principle of the increase in the present numbers of caravan/tents from 24 caravans/6 tents to 25 caravans/15 tents and a warden's caravan, and the extension to the operating season by two months, meets the Authority's Core Strategy (CS) policy RT3 and Local Plan (LP) policies LR3 and LR5.

Core Strategy (CS) policy RT3 states that proposals for caravan and camping sites must conform to the following principles:

- A. Small touring camping and caravan sites and backpack camping sites will be permitted, particularly in areas where there are few existing sites, provided that they are well screened, have appropriate access to the road network, and do not adversely affect living conditions.
- B. Static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted.
- C. Provision of improved facilities on existing caravan and camping sites, including shops and recreation opportunities, must be of a scale appropriate to the site itself.
- D. Development that would improve the quality of existing sites, including improvements to upgrade facilities, access, landscaping, or the appearance of existing static caravans, will be encouraged.

The explanatory text to CS policy RT3 states that a restrictive policy in respect of caravan sites is appropriate because national policy gives great weight to protection of the landscape in national parks. Size is an important factor in assessing the impact of a caravan or camping site on the landscape and traffic movements. CS policy RT3 states that small touring camping and caravan sites may be acceptable, but 'small' is not defined, either in terms of extent or number of pitches. Appropriate size will, therefore, vary from site to site. For guidance, however, sites up to 30 pitches are more likely to be acceptable, although this may be too large in many circumstances.

Local Plan (LP) policy LR3 further states, amongst other things, that a small extension to an existing site will not be permitted unless its scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable, and it does not dominate its surroundings.

LP policy LR5 states that where the development of a touring camping or caravan site is acceptable, its use will be restricted to holiday accommodation. For an existing camping or caravan site, the removal of any condition that stipulates months of occupation, and its replacement by a holiday occupancy condition, will be permitted, provided that it is adequately screened in winter months and that there would be no adverse impact on the valued characteristics of the area or residential amenity.

CS policy L1 states that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character, as identified in the Landscape Strategy and action Plan, and other valued characteristics.

Paragraphs 17, 115 and 126 of the NPPF and CS Policy L1 seek to conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park landscape. The provisions of L1 are supported by Local Plan policy LC4 which are permissive of development that would respect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area.

There are three elements to this proposal; the overall increase in caravan and tent pitches from 30 to 40 pitches; the extension of the season for a further two months into the winter months; and the provision of a warden's caravan. The next section of this report assesses the acceptability of the additional nine pitches for tents and the proposed additional caravan pitch, taking into account this pitch is already in use, and the extension of the season to allow the camping and caravanning site to operate fully in February and November, taking into account the current approval restricts the use of the site to a maximum of six caravans during these months.

Proposed increase in caravan and tent pitches from 30 to 40 pitches

The above policy context generally permits the provision of small caravan and camping sites of up to 30 pitches, where they can be accommodated into the landscape and where their landscape impacts can be further mitigated by appropriate landscaping. Small extensions to existing established sites can also be considered, provided that access, scale and landscape impacts are acceptable. In this case the proposals would increase the number of pitches to 40 pitches of which a maximum of 25 would be for touring caravans. This increase involves one additional caravan pitch and an increase in the number tent pitches from the current six to a total of 15 tent pitches.

In terms of access, the site is relatively close to the main B5054 Hartington - Warslow road with only a relatively short ½km stretch of lane to the caravan site itself. Access visibility at the site entrance is reasonable and the highway authority have raised no objections to the proposals. In access terms, therefore, there would be no significant or adverse impacts generated by the proposed increase in caravan/tent pitches.

In terms of landscape impact, the increase in caravan and tent pitches would be accommodated within the perimeter of the existing caravan & camp site. The majority of the tents are to be situated within the southern half of the site and surrounded on three sides by the caravan pitches

which are positioned around the perimeter of the field. Two of the tent pitches are to be positioned within the north-eastern corner of the caravan & camp site. These two pitches are adjacent to a neighbouring copse of trees and are enclosed to the north by an established thorn hedge.

The existing caravan site is well screened from viewpoints to the north, because of the topography of the field, and to the east by existing established tree and hedge planting, which has been supplemented by more recent planting.

It is acknowledged, however, that the site is visible in the landscape, particularly when approaching the site from the lane to the south and west and from the public footpath that passes close to the southern perimeter of the site. These existing views are presently more open because of the failure of the initial landscaping/tree planting around the perimeter of the caravan site. Comprehensive boundary tree and hedge planting has now been completed around the perimeter of the site, which has been provided with protective fencing and rabbit guards in order to ensure it becomes established this time. However, it is acknowledged that this will take some years to have a significant screening effect and due to the sloping nature of the caravan field this planting is designed to mitigate the landscape impact, rather than provide a complete screen.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the landscaping will take some years to properly become established, given that there is no actual physical extension of the existing site and that the majority of the new pitches are located within the lower half of the site and surrounded by existing caravans, it is not considered that there would be a significant and adverse landscape impact over and above that already created by the extant use of the site for caravans and tented camping.

The extension of the season by a further two months into the winter months

The above Local Plan policy LR5 permits the replacement of seasonal permissions for caravan and camp sites with a holiday occupation condition where it can be demonstrated that the site would be adequately screened during the winter months and where there would be no adverse impacts upon the valued characteristics of the area or residential amenity.

In respect of this site, the nature and topography of the site would not render it suitable for all-year round use as the perimeter landscaping, even when it has become established would be unlikely to provide sufficient screening.

In this case the applicant, for economic reasons, is proposing an extension of one month either side of the permitted operating period so that the caravan and camp site can continue operating during the months February and November of each year. These extensions are to accommodate the half-term holiday period in February and enquiries received by the applicant for people wishing visit during Halloween and Bonfire Night period.

It is acknowledged that the site will be more open in landscape terms during these two additional months, particularly at the moment, as the hedge and tree planting is not established and that this will be less effective even when established when the tree/hedge planting is not in leaf. Given that the proposed extension is for a two-month period and the site will be completely closed during December and January, this is, on balance, considered to be acceptable. It is also considered unlikely that the site would be used to its full operating capacity during these two additional months, due to the likely adverse weather conditions, but would allow the operator some flexibility to assist in the viable running of the site.

Overall, therefore, it is considered that the principle of the increase in the total number of caravan and tent pitches is acceptable and would not have a significant adverse landscape impact on the established valued characteristics of the area, given the nature and scale of the existing extant use of the caravan and camp site.

Issue 2 - Whether the proposed warden's caravan is justified and complies with the Authority's CS policy RT3 and LP Recreation & Tourism policies, specifically LP policy LR3 (c) and Core strategy policy HC2 .

The explanatory text to CS policy RT3 states that permanent homes for site wardens on camping and caravan sites may be acceptable in some circumstances, but must be justified in terms of essential need for a dwelling on site. Wherever possible, they should be provided by conversion of existing traditional buildings of historic or vernacular merit. Such proposals will be considered with reference to policy HC2. Local Plan (LP) policy LR3 further states, amongst other things, that permanent dwellings for site warden's accommodation at camping and caravan sites will not be permitted. National planning policies in the Framework otherwise presume against isolated new homes in the countryside.

In this case, the proposal is not for a permanent warden's dwelling, but for a warden's caravan to be situated on the site for the proposed 10-month period, whilst the caravan site is open for business. The applicant states that a warden's presence on site is essential. The warden's duties include mowing, landscaping, cleaning, maintenance and providing cover when she is away from the caravan site. It is also important to have a warden's presence at the site, particularly during the evenings and at night, in order to control any possible noise or disturbance issues. The proposed warden's caravan is to be situated within the centre of the site at the southern end of the open grassed amenity area, in an ideal position to be able to monitor and manage the site.

Even with the present extent of the caravan and camp site use, it is considered appropriate to have a warden's presence on the site in order to ensure that it is managed and maintained in an appropriate manner. Given that a permanent warden's dwelling is not being proposed, it is not considered that these proposals need to meet the terms of CS policy HC2, as referred to in the explanatory text accompanying CS policy RT3, which would otherwise require the accommodation to be subject to financial and functional tests. Moreover, the restrictive approach of LP policy LR3 relates to the provision of permanent warden's dwelling accommodation.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposed warden's caravan would comply with the guidance given in the explanatory text, and would not conflict with the overarching presumption against new residential development in open countryside, provided that a planning condition is attached restricting its siting to the months when the caravan and camp site is operating.

Issue 3 - The impact of the proposed increase in caravan/tent numbers, together with the extension of the operating season upon the ecological interests within the vicinity of the caravan site.

Core Strategy policy L2 states that development must conserve and enhance any sites, features or species of biodiversity importance and where appropriate, their setting. Other than in exceptional circumstances development will not be permitted where it is likely to have an adverse impact upon any sites, features or species of biodiversity importance of their setting that have statutory designation or are of international or national importance for their biodiversity. Local Plan policy LC17 reinforces this approach to foster the protection and enhancement of known sites of ecological interest. These policies in the Development Plan are consistent with national planning policies in the Framework, which seek to safeguard wildlife and conserve and enhance biodiversity.

In this case, the original 2011 consent for the relocation caravan and camp from the northern field into the southern field was partly justified on the basis that it would take the caravan and camping activities further way from adjoining land at Lower Hurst Farm, which is in a Higher Level Stewardship scheme, principally to benefit breeding birds including lapwing, curlew and snipe. Concerns had been raised by the Authority's Ecologist that any increase in noise and

disturbance from an increased usage of the caravan site on Upper Hurst Farm could be detrimental to the breeding bird interest on Lower Hurst Farm. Further concerns related to issues with disturbance and displacement of breeding waders resulting from increased noise on the caravan site and increased usage of the public footpath, which crosses both farms, by walkers and dog walkers.

The Authority's Ecologist has been consulted on this latest proposal to increase the number of pitches and extend the opening season. The Authority's Ecologist acknowledges that the previous 2011 planning application removed the camping activities from the land closest, and most exposed to, the neighbouring landholding, for which payment through HLS was being made for habitat improvements for breeding waders. Moreover, the field used for camping tents is screened from fields known to have been used by waders on Lower Hurst farm by the lie of the land and hedgerows and shelter belts.

Therefore, the Authority's Ecologist considers that the proposal for an extra 10 tent pitches, and importantly contained within the same field, is unlikely to result in significant additional disturbance to breeding birds in adjacent fields. Additionally, as the proposed extended periods occur in the winter months of November and February, these will not adversely impact upon the bird breeding season. Natural England have also been consulted and concur with the Authority Ecologist's views.

Consequently, it is not considered that there will be any significant adverse impacts upon the ecological interests on the adjoining land, and the proposal therefore complies with national planning policies in the Framework and the above-stated Core Strategy and Local Plan policies.

Issue 4 - The impact upon the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

Core Strategy Policy GSP3 states, amongst other things, that development must pay attention to the form and intensity of a proposed use or activity and its impact upon the living conditions of communities. This is reinforced by Local plan policy LC4 which states, amongst other things, that attention should be paid to the amenity, privacy and security of the development and of nearby properties.

The camping and caravan site is situated around 248m to the north of the nearest residential property (Harecop Farm) and there are two other properties (Endon House and Lower Hurst Farm) that are situated about 400m to the west and 350m to the north-east respectively. Given the extant use for the caravan and camping site it is not considered that the proposed increase from 30 to 40 pitches would significantly impact upon the residential amenities of these properties by way of noise or disturbance. Moreover, it is considered that any noise/amenity impacts would be further mitigated by the proposed warden's presence on the site.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposal complies with the terms of the above Core Strategy and Local Plan policies and does not otherwise conflict with core planning policies in the Framework that .

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that the proposed increase from 30 to 40 caravan/tent pitches and the extension of the operating period at the camping and caravanning site at Upper Hurst Farm will not have any significant or adverse landscape impacts. This is because the additional pitches are largely provided within the confines of the existing caravan site and the landscape impacts will be further mitigated by the comprehensive tree/hedge planting that has recently been completed, once this becomes established. Given the distances away from the nearest residential properties it is not considered that the proposed increase in caravan/tent pitches will adversely impact upon their residential amenities, and this will be further mitigated by the proposed warden's presence on the site.

Moreover it is not considered that there will be any significant or adverse impacts upon the ecological interests on the adjacent land. Consequently, it is considered that the proposed increase in caravan/tent pitches, together with the warden's caravan are acceptable and comply with the above-stated Core Strategy, Local Plan policies and national planning policies in the Framework.

Accordingly, the current application is recommended for conditional approval.

In this case, as this application is being made under s.73, it is recommended that any relevant and subsisting conditions attached to Planning Decision NP/SM/0711/0677 should be attached to the any new permission alongside an updated landscaping condition to ensure any trees recently planted are replaced in the event they are damaged or within the next five years; and updated conditions to limit the increase in the number of caravan/tent pitches to that proposed in the current application, place controls on the siting of the warden's caravan and restrictions on use of the site in the winter months. These conditions are considered to be reasonable and necessary in the interests of the proper planning of the local area and in the interests of safeguarding the valued characteristics of the local area and minimising the visual impact of the camping and caravanning site on the landscape setting of Upper Hurst Farm.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil