

13. FULL APPLICATION - CHANGE OF USE OF LAND (AREA 10) FROM TOURING/CAMPING PLOTS TO STATIONING OF HOLIDAY LODGES AND STATIC CARAVANS, ASHBOURNE HEIGHTS CARAVAN PARK ASHBOURNE ROAD FENNY BENTLEY (NP/DDD/0523/0520, JS)

APPLICANT: MR MATTHEW PURDOM (PARK HOLIDAYS UK LTD)

Summary

1. The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of land (area 10) from touring/camping plots to stationing of holiday lodges and static caravans at an established caravan and camping site. It is considered that the proposal can be accepted as an exception to the normal presumption against lodges and static caravans by virtue of the well-established and well screened nature of this part of the site, the fact that the units will replace a higher number of seasonal touring pitches, and the proposals for landscape and biodiversity enhancement. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Site and Surroundings

2. Ashbourne Heights is an established caravan and holiday park located to the west of the A515, approximately 700 metres north of Fenny Bentley. It has a mixture of static caravan pitches, lodges and touring pitches, together with buildings providing facilities for visitors to the site; these are in predominantly traditional buildings in the centre of the site. The site takes access off the A515 and crosses over the Tissington Trail which runs immediately to the east of the site. The Park currently consists of a mixture of touring caravan and camping pitches, static caravans and lodges. There are a number of ancillary facilities on site, including, a shop, office, bar and swimming pool.
3. The application relates to part of the site known as Area 10 or Thorpe Meadow. This field is located north of the current facilities buildings within the existing site. It has an area of approximately 1ha. The total site ownership has an area of approximately 21.8ha, within this the “operational” site has an area of approximately 10.2ha. Following planting schemes carried out under previous planning permissions the site is now relatively well screened in the landscape, with the exception of the southern boundary, which is relatively open.
4. The site lies within the Derbyshire Peak Fringe Landscape Character area, characterised as Village Farmlands on shale ridges. The site does not lie within the defined Natural Zone or within a Conservation Area. The surrounding landscape, and some parts of the site have historic ridge and furrow field systems, although none are scheduled as ancient monuments.

Proposal

5. The application is for the change of use of land (area 10) from touring/camping plots to stationing of holiday lodges and static caravans. Area 10 is a field in the north-western corner of the site, to the north of the facilities buildings. The development proposes the siting of modern lodge and static caravan accommodation in the touring field known as Area 10 or Thorpe Meadow on a permanent basis, replacing the existing touring caravan use. The area has a current potential capacity of around 40 plots for touring caravan/camping. The proposal is for 20 pitches, with the plans showing 16 static caravan units and 4 lodges.
6. The new lodge/static accommodation is proposed to have a seasonal occupation restriction to preclude occupation from 16 January to 1 March to align with recent

planning conditions elsewhere on the site.

7. The Planning Statement accompanying the application explains that as part of a landscape and ecology led approach substantial new tree and hedgerow planting is proposed, increasing the site's landscape screening and biodiversity. This includes a water "detention" basin in the south-west corner of the area to manage water run-off, with a wooden walkway around it.
8. The application is accompanied by a Planning Statement, setting out the proposal and summarising the supporting documents:
 - Design and Access Statement.
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Bat and Reptile surveys
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
 - Heritage Statement (Archaeology and Built Heritage)
 - Landscaping Planting schedule and Landscape detailed layout soft landscaping
 - Transport Statement
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement

RECOMMENDATION:

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

- 1 **Statutory 3 year commencement.**
- 2 **Compliance with submitted plans and specifications, subject to the following:**
- 3 **Submit details of the design and external appearance, including colour of the static caravans and lodges.**
- 4 **Occupancy of units to be short stay holiday accommodation, maximum 28 days per person per calendar year, no occupancy permitted 16 January to 1 March in each calendar year**
- 5 **Submit and implement a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to include the location and specification of bat and bird features along with objectives and management prescriptions for the enhancement of the habitat on site (including details regarding the proposed water basin, grassland and trees).**
- 6 **Submit and implement woodland management plan.**
- 7 **Scheme of Archaeological Works:**
 1. ***No development shall take place until a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological work (trial trenching and any subsequently required mitigation) has been submitted to and approved by the National Park Authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and***
 1. ***The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;***
 2. ***The programme for post investigation assessment;***
 3. ***Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and***

recording;

- 4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation;**
 - 5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation;**
 - 6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organization to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.**
- 2. No development shall take place until all pre-start elements of the approved scheme and any subsequent mitigation required have been completed to the written satisfaction of the local planning authority, and all subsequent development will take place in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition a).**
 - 3. Within a period of 12 weeks from completion of the development the archaeological site investigation and post investigation analysis and reporting shall have been completed in accordance with the (set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (a) and the provision to be made for publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition shall have been secured.**
- 8 Submit and implement Travel Plan for both staff and visitors staying at the site.**
 - 9 The holiday lodges and static caravans, the subjects of the application, shall not be taken into use until space has been provided within the application site in accordance with the application drawings for the parking of visitors vehicles, laid out, surfaced and maintained throughout the life of the development free from any impediment to its designated use.**
 - 10 Drainage conditions recommended by the Lead Local Flood Authority (see report).**

Key Issues

- The principle of development
- Impact on the landscape character and special qualities of the National Park
- Travel and transport

History

9. The site at Ashbourne Heights was originally known as Highfields Farm. It has a long and complex planning history, with numerous applications for both planning permission and certificates of lawful use, together with various enforcement issues, which are summarised below.
10. The original farm had been in a mixed use for agriculture and the siting of caravans dating back to the 1950s. In 1966 planning permission was granted for the siting of 14 touring caravans in the south west corner of the farm subject to an Agreement that an 'established' use would cease on the other fields. Further planning permissions were granted on other specific areas of land on the farm in the 1970s. In 1990 the farm was sold to a new owner who continued the mixed caravan site and agricultural use. In the 1990s, a number of planning permissions were granted for ancillary facilities at the site to serve the larger holiday caravan and camping park.

11. In 2004, 11 Lawful development applications (LDCs) were submitted which covered 11 specific areas which became known as Plots 1-11. At the time of these applications, it became clear that the primary use of Highfields Farm was now as a caravan and camping site and that any agricultural use had ceased. Of the 11 applications submitted in 2004, those relating to 5 were granted, either in whole or in part, and the applications relating to 6 plots were refused. Around 2009 the name of the site was changed from Highfields Farm to Ashbourne Heights, and the then owners submitted a number of further LDC and planning applications relating to the use of individual areas within the site. The planning status of the site at that time was very complex, with different areas of the site authorised by a number of planning permissions and LDCs relating to changes of use on specific areas. In addition, there are a number of planning permissions relating to ancillary facilities for the general running of the site.
12. The current planning status as a holiday park was established by a Certificate of Lawful Existing use and Development (CLEUD). This was granted in December 2016 and consolidated the preceding complex planning history and confirmed the use of most of the site as a Holiday Caravan and Camping Site. The Certificate identifies specific areas of the site and the nature of the lawful use of those areas at that time, with seasonal use of most of the site as 1st March to 31st October, with some parts having an extended season of 1st March to 16th January, and one part (the eastern field) having a shorter season of July and August.
13. NP/DDD/1222/1572: An application for change of use of land for the stationing of holiday lodges, static caravans and glamping pods, redevelopment of existing facilities to provide new amenity facilities was submitted in November 2022. This included the current application site, the field along the eastern side of the site, and a substantial new facilities building replacing the original farmhouse and barn. This application was withdrawn following discussions with Planning Officer, indicating that the application likely to be recommended for refusal.

Consultations

14. Highway Authority: *“On the basis of the sites extant use it is not considered that the proposal would result in any negative impact from a Highways safety point of view, therefore, the Highway Authority has no objections to the proposal, and it is recommended the following condition is included in any consent:*
 1. *The holiday lodges and static caravans, the subjects of the application, shall not be taken into use until space has been provided within the application site in accordance with the application drawings for the parking of visitors vehicles, laid out, surfaced and maintained throughout the life of the development free from any impediment to its designated use.”*
15. District Council: No response.
16. Fenny Bentley Parish Council: No objection.
17. Environment Agency: The site is located within flood zone 1 and therefore we have no fluvial flood risk concerns associated with the site. There is an ordinary watercourse which runs close to the site located to the east of the site which the EA do not hold modelled data for however the LLFA may hold data for this watercourse. There are no other constraints associated with the site which fall within the remit of the EA however given that a connection to the foul drainage network is not possible on this site then please refer the applicant to the below advisory note.
18. Derbyshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA): No objection

subject to the conditions:

“No development shall take place until a detailed design and associated management and maintenance plan of the surface water drainage for the site, in accordance with the principles outlined within:

a. Flood Risk Assessment for Park Holiday UK LTD, Doc Ref: SHF.202.143.HY.R.001.E, Dated May 2023 “including any subsequent amendments or updates to those documents as approved by the Flood Risk Management Team”

b. And DEFRA’s Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (March 2015), have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

19. *Prior to commencement of the development, the applicant shall submit for approval to the LPA details indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction phase. The applicant may be required to provide collection, balancing and/or settlement systems for these flows. The approved system shall be operating to the satisfaction of the LPA, before the commencement of any works, which would lead to increased surface water run-off from site during the construction phase.*
20. *Prior to the first occupation of the development, a verification report carried out by a qualified drainage engineer must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This must demonstrate that the drainage system has been constructed as per the agreed scheme (or detail any minor variations), provide the details of any management company and state the national grid reference of any key drainage elements (surface water attenuation devices/areas, flow restriction devices and outfalls).*
21. **PDNPA Policy:** The response sets out the relevant policies and provides the following conclusions on compliance with these policies:
“Accordance with policy GSP1: The application focuses on providing accommodation and facilities in line with the second National Park purpose. However, the impact of the delivery of the static accommodation elements of the scheme are in conflict with other National Park planning policies aimed at limiting the impact of static accommodation structures at camping and caravanning sites on the landscape. Therefore, the development is in conflict with part C of Policy GSP1. The scale of the development, with the proposed provision of an additional 20 static units would constitute major development within the National Park. If so, unless the applicant is able to demonstrate exceptional circumstances in support of the development, it would be contrary to Part E of Policy GSP1.

Accordance with Recreation and Tourism policy: The provision of additional static structures (static caravans or lodges) is clearly contrary to Part B of Policy RT3. Whilst Part C of Policy DMR3 allows for the exceptional development of accommodation structures, the policy only allows for small scale development of this nature. The text accompanying Policy RT3 highlights the use of provision of camping pods where these are small, simple, wooden pod structures in woodland locations with minimal landscape impact, or of a single shepherd’s hut where this can be located close to the facilities of a farmstead without harm to the natural or historic landscape. The proposed provision of an additional 20 static units is of a scale that is contrary to the intent of Policy DMR1. It is noted that the development would see a potential reduction in the overall number of units from 38 touring units to 20 static units. However, these would be semi-permanent units and would almost certainly each take up more space than a single touring caravan. There would also be a requirement to ensure that each unit is connected to services including waste, water and electricity. This is effectively a more permanent and intense development than the current use as a site for touring caravans. It is assumed that the season of operation will also be longer than the current touring caravan operation of this particular part of the site.

Accordance with Transport policy: The current proposal includes the provision of one car parking spaces per unit, this is in accordance with the Peak District National Park Parking Standards. The current application does not include a Travel Plan for either staff or visitors to the site. A development of this scale offers the opportunity to influence travel behaviours, particularly those of visitors to the site. People enjoying a leisure experience are known to be more amenable to new experiences, including modal shift. In the event of planning permission being granted, it should be conditional on the provision of a Travel Plan for both staff and visitors staying at the site”

22. **PDNPA Ecology:** No objection subject to conditions. Recommend the production of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to include the location and specification of bat and bird features along with objectives and management prescriptions for the enhancement of the habitat on site (including details regarding the proposed water basin, grassland and trees) to be secured through a planning condition. Note the inclusion of some native species within the Planting as shown on the Planting layout by Enzygo (2023) but would prefer all species included with any planting scheme to be native and preferably of local provenance which will generally provide greater value to wildlife. The Mitigation Strategy within the Landscape and Visual Assessment illustrates a hibernacula and this is welcomed within the design. To further achieve net gain (in line with NPPF) we welcome the production of a Woodland Management Plan (WMP) in relation to the 1ha section of the mixed young plantation woodland in the west of the holiday park.
23. **PDNPA Archaeology:** (Following submission of a Heritage Impact Assessment). *Taking into accounts current use and previous impacts and the estimate of significance outlined above I recommend that this is dealt with by a staged programme of archaeological investigation secured by condition (see above in recommendation). This should start with evaluation by trial trenching across the development area, which will inform any subsequent mitigation required. Should the results of the evaluation be negative then no mitigation will be required. This is proportionate response and likely to be more time and cost effective than an uninformed and untargeted watching brief.*

The following detailed comments were made (summarised):

Significance and potential

I agree with the assessment with respect to the ridge and furrow. This is likely to be medieval in origin, resulting from ploughing activity. The ridge and furrow earthworks in this area are less well preserved than in other areas of the immediately surrounding landscape, but they are still clearly visible on available LiDAR data... These are non-designated heritage assets of historic and archaeological interest. Their eroded and degraded nature means they are of local significance.

This legibility of the ridge and furrow is evidence that previous impacts in this field e.g. installation of the electrical connection and use by touring caravans hasn't been enough to fully erode the earthworks. So, whilst some disturbance of buried archaeological remains could have taken place, this isn't deemed enough to destroy any previous archaeological interest.

*The historic environment assessment assesses the archaeological potential of this area for pre-medieval archaeological remains to be low. However, it acknowledges such sites surveyed elsewhere in the landscape and that there is no evidence to preclude similar activity within the site..... the potential for pre-medieval remains in this area is actually **unknown**. the survival of ridge and furrow in this area demonstrates that this land has not been ploughed or significantly disturbed in modern times, thus that there is potential for earlier archaeological remains to survive. Any such remains would*

*be considered non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, but the nature, extent or level of significance of any such remains is **unknown**. Taking into account the archaeological context of the site, I would estimate that the risk of any surviving remains being features of high or very high (national) significance would be relatively low and due to the fact that there have been previous impacts in this area both with respect to medieval agriculture and later activity, it is unlikely the any surviving earlier remains would be entirely undisturbed or exceptionally well preserved.*

Impact

The groundworks required to create the hardstanding for the caravans and cabins, for the access road and tracks, for the water attenuation ponds, for services and drainage will cause harm to the ridge and furrow earthworks, resulting in their complete loss, and on potential for previously unknown and unrecorded archaeological remains and features that survive below the ridge and furrow earthworks”.

Representations

24. We have received one representation, from the Ramblers Derbyshire Dales Group, which has no objection providing that:
- i) Fenny Bentley FP 20 remains unaffected at all times, including the path surface, both during and after any development
 - ii) Consideration should be given to the safety of members of the public using the Right of Way during the proposed works
 - iii) Any encroachment of the path would need consultation and permission with/from the DCC Rights of Way Team
 - iv) From the three site plans, it would have been helpful to have shown the Right of Way

Main Policies

25. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, GSP4, DS1, L1, L3, RT3, T1, T2, T7, CC1.
26. Relevant Development Management policies: DMC3, DMR4, DMT3, DMT8.

National Planning Policy Framework

27. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be considered as 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 our Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Management Policies 2019. Policies in the development plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park’s statutory purposes for the determination of this application. There is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the development plan and the NPPF and our policies should be given full weight in the determination of this application.

28. Paragraph 178 states that *“great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.”*

Peak District National Park Core Strategy

29. Policy GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park’s objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle, (that is, where there are conflicting desired outcomes in achieving national park purposes, greater priority must be given to the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, even at the cost of socio-economic benefits). GSP1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major development unless it is essential, and the need to mitigate localised harm where essential major development is allowed.
30. Policy GSP2: *Enhancing the National Park* states that opportunities for enhancing the valued characteristics of the National Park will be identified and acted upon. Proposals intended to enhance the National Park will need to demonstrate that they offer significant overall benefit to the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. Development in settlements necessary for the treatment, removal or relocation of nonconforming uses to an acceptable site, or which would enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park will be permitted.
31. Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.
32. Policy GSP4 says that to aid the achievement of its spatial outcomes, the National Park Authority will consider the contribution that a development can make directly and/or to its setting, including, where consistent with government guidance, using planning conditions and planning obligations.
33. Policy DS1 sets out the Development Strategy for the National Park. DS1.C. sets out the forms of development that are acceptable in principle in the countryside outside of the Natural Zone. There is no scope for the erection of new housing here other than as part of development needed to secure effective conservation and enhancement.
34. Policy L1 says that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted.
35. Policy L3 says that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal the significance of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic assets and their settings, including statutory designations and other heritage assets of international, national, regional or local importance. Other than, in exceptional circumstances development will not be permitted where it is likely to cause harm to the significance of any cultural heritage asset.

36. Policy RT3 states that 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. Part B makes it clear that static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted. Part C requires that the 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. Part D states that 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
37. Policy T1: *Reducing the general need to travel and encouraging sustainable transport* sets out the Plan's aim of encouraging modal shift and reducing the number of journeys by private car. Policy T2: *Reducing and directing traffic*; Part F of the policy states that Travel Plans to reduce traffic movements and safeguard transport infrastructure will be required on appropriate new developments and encouraged on existing developments. Policy T7: *Minimising the adverse impact of motor vehicles and managing the demand for car and coach parks*: Part B states that residential parking and operational parking for service and delivery vehicles will be the minimum required for operational purposes, taking into account environmental constraints and future requirements.
38. Policy CC1 states that development must make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources, taking into account the energy hierarchy and achieving the highest possible standards of carbon reductions and water efficiency.

Development Management Policies

39. The most relevant development management policies are DMC3, DMC5, DMC11, DMR1, DMT3.
40. Policy DMC3 says where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including the wildlife and cultural heritage that contribute to the distinctive sense of place.
41. Policy DMC5 requires that planning applications for development affecting a heritage asset, including its setting must clearly demonstrate: (i) its significance including how any identified features of value will be conserved and where possible enhanced; and (ii) why the proposed development and related works are desirable or necessary. Development of a designated or non-designated heritage asset will not be permitted if it would result in any harm to, or loss of, the significance, character and appearance of a heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), unless: for non-designated heritage assets, the development is considered by the Authority to be acceptable following a balanced judgement that takes into account the significance of the heritage asset.
42. Policy DMC11 relates to safeguarding, recording and enhancing nature conservation interests and aims to achieve net gains to biodiversity or geodiversity as a result of development.
43. Policy DMR1 *Touring camping and caravan sites* states:
- A. The development of a new touring camping or touring caravan site, or 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.*

B. Shopping, catering or sport and leisure facilities at camping and caravan sites will be permitted provided that they accord with the requirements of Part A and there is no significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of existing facilities in surrounding communities.

C. Exceptionally, the development of structures may be permitted where these are small, simple, wooden pod structures in woodland locations with minimal landscape impact, or a single shepherd's hut where this can be located close to the facilities of a farmstead without harm to the natural or historic landscape

44. Policy DMT3 sets out that development will only be permitted where a safe access that is achievable for all people can be provided in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality.

Assessment

Principle of proposed development

45. The proposed development would result in the loss of 38 touring caravan pitches and their replacement with 20 lodge and static caravan pitches (4 lodges and 16 static units) which would be on site all year round, but with restricted occupancy so that they would be vacant for part of January and most of February and March. They would be permanent structures, with their own facilities, although they would also have access to the wider site facilities. Policy RT3(B) of the Core Strategy specifically states that static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted. However, the supporting text says that, exceptionally, static caravans, chalets or lodges may be acceptable in locations where they are not intrusive in the landscape. RT3 therefore makes a general presumption against this type of development unless it is proposed in locations where it would not be intrusive in the landscape. Policy DMR1 provides further criteria, permitting small, simple, wooden pod structures in principle where they are located in woodland settings and have acceptable landscape impacts.

46. The supporting text to DMR1 is important so it is quoted in full: *“5.20 Core Strategy policy RT3 is clear that static caravans, chalets and lodges are not acceptable features in the National Park. The open character of large parts of landscape particularly in the White Peak and Dark Peak mean that the non-traditional and permanent presence of such forms of accommodation is incompatible with the conservation purpose of the National Park. There is however a growing range of alternative forms of accommodation such as camping pods, yurts, shepherd's huts etc. which have come onto the market in response to a demand for greater quality and comfort. For clarity, the National Park Authority considers all such forms of accommodation to have the same potential for adverse landscape impact and therefore they will be determined against Core Strategy policy RT3B.*

5.21 There may be exceptional circumstances where some structures may be acceptable. For example, experience has highlighted that wooden pod structures with no associated development can provide a sensitive, low key form of accommodation particularly in woodland settings where the scope for landscape harm is negligible. Such solutions can help to support the local economy by extending the tourism season. Similarly, the traditionally styled shepherd's hut accommodation can also provide an alternative form of provision with very minimal landscape impact but can only be justified as exceptional if only one hut is installed on any one agricultural holding. Such development should be used to support farm diversification and as such should also be assessed against the requirements of policy DME2. Policy DMR1 then requires that such development is located close to an existing farmstead where existing access, parking arrangements and facilities can be utilised”.

47. The proposal is therefore in conflict with these policies unless it can be demonstrated that there are exceptional reasons for approval, as suggested in the extracts quoted above. This issue has been dealt with in the Planning Statement, which states: *“The preclusion of static caravans and lodges in policy RC3 B is recognised as not being a total preclusion of such accommodation in paragraph 10.26 of the CS which states “Exceptionally, static caravans, chalets or lodges may be acceptable in locations where they are not intrusive in the landscape.” The scheme will therefore fulfil the requirement of CS Policies GSP1 and GSP2 and RC3 and DMP Policies DMC3 and 5”*. In response to this, officers agree that the site is well screened and, unlike other recent proposals elsewhere, it is a well-established site with good access. The proposed units would also replace a larger number of seasonal touring pitches. However, it is also the case that the proposed lodges and static caravans are larger than the wooden pod structures referred to in the Development Plan extract above.
48. The Authority's Policy team response suggests that the proposed development is major development. In assessing this application there are two definitions of major development. Firstly, the technical definition in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 is development (other than housing) carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more. The application site area is approximately 1 hectare. However, footnote 60 of the NPPF says: "For the purposes of paragraphs 176 and 177 (i.e. development impacting on a national park), whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined". Using this definition, a judgement can be made as to whether or not a development is "major". For the reasons set out in this report, it is considered that the siting of permanent static caravans and lodges on a part of an established site where a greater number of touring units is approved would not be major development by virtue of its very limited impacts on the special qualities of the National Park. In other words there is no appreciable harm arising from the proposals, and as such the criteria in the NPPF relating to significant adverse impacts do not arise. As this report sets out, the site is well established, with good screening, but the application would result in additional screening and biodiversity, with a near 50% reduction in the number of units, albeit with the new units being permanent and generally larger than a standard touring unit
49. Taking these various issues and considerations into account, it is concluded, on balance, that the replacement of the seasonal touring units on part of the site with permanent, but seasonally occupied, units is acceptable in this specific case. The site is relatively large and this part of it is well screened. It would still offer a range of accommodation and pitches on the site, with the eastern field being available for short season touring and camping. The approval of this application would not set a precedent for further approvals on the site because this part of the site is one of the best screened and has a lawful use for a relatively long season for 38 touring units. An approval also provides an opportunity for additional landscape and biodiversity enhancements. On this basis, an exceptional approval is appropriate, but the detailed impacts are assessed in the following sections

Landscape Impacts

50. Ashbourne Heights is an established large-scale holiday park, having developed and expanded over many years. As a result of landscaping requirements from previous planning permissions, the site is well screened and is not highly visible from the surrounding landscape. A detailed assessment of potential visual impact has been carried out and submitted with the application as a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This concludes that *“The receiving landscape, although of potentially high sensitivity, is visually contained such that the development of the*

proposed areas forstatic caravans could be successfully incorporated without any long-term detrimental effects on the local or wider landscape character.”

51. The application also includes additional landscaping to further reinforce the screening of the site from its landscape setting and surroundings. It is proposed to plant a new tree and hedgerow along the northern boundary of Area 10 and additional trees to the north-western corner of this field, as the area to the north and north-west are the most exposed in terms of this part of the site, although views from the road between Tissington and Thorpe are now much better screened than they were several years ago.
52. This additional planting will also create enhanced habitat and biodiversity gains, which is considered to be necessary given that parts of the site are relatively “manicured” in terms of management and some of the screening is from conifers rather than native species. The response of the Authority’s Ecologist and her recommendations echo this. In the event of this application being approved, a condition requiring additional details and management is considered to be reasonable and necessary. Whilst the replacement of existing touring pitches with permanently sited static caravan/lodge accommodation would have a more permanent impact, the fact that the existing site, and Area 10 in particular, is visually well-contained means that the development would not affect the wider. Any visual impact would be confined to occupants of the holiday park and users of the public footpath that runs through the holiday park (this aspect is dealt with below).
53. The LVIA conclusions are considered to be accurate and it is accepted that the change from touring plots to static/lodge accommodation would not materially increase the visual impact of the site or affect the wider landscape setting of the site. It would therefore conserve the valued landscape character and valued characteristics of this part of the National Park and provide opportunities for enhancement, in accordance with Policies GSP1, GSP2, and L1 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Issues:

54. Access to the proposed development would be via the existing access off the A515 and through the existing site. The Highway Authority does not object to the application, subject to conditions, which can be added to any permission.
55. The application is accompanied by a detailed Transport Assessment. This concludes that the site currently has permission for around 289 plots for both touring/static caravans, lodges and tent pitches (178 touring caravan/tent pitches and 111 static caravans. On the basis that the applicant proposes to convert a section of the existing site (Area 10) from 38 existing touring/camping pitches to allow for 20 holiday lodges/static pitches, the assessment says that this would allow for a revised composition of circa 131 static pitches and 140 touring/tent pitches, a net reduction of 18 plots. with an overall. As a result there would be a small net decrease of 1 trip in the morning peak and 3 trips in the evening peak. The redevelopment would also remove an element of caravans being towed into / out of the site access along the A515 (loss of 38 touring pitches), and instead be replaced by cars visiting the static caravans/lodges. This would therefore represent a betterment to the operation of the existing access and surrounding junctions on the public highway network. The Transport Assessment therefore concludes that the proposal would not give rise to a severe or detrimental impact on the surrounding wider highway network. It also notes that parking would be provided adjacent to each plot, to ensure that no parking occurs along the internal access roads.
56. However, the Authority’s Transport Policy Officer has advised that a development of this scale offers the opportunity to influence travel behaviours, particularly those of visitors to the site. People enjoying a leisure experience are known to be more amenable to new

experiences, including modal shift. He recommends that in the event of planning permission being granted, it should be conditional on the provision of a Travel Plan for both staff and visitors staying at the site.

Economic Impact and Market Demand

57. The supporting Planning Statement includes a detailed section on economic Impact and market demand, providing data on the number of sites, their ownership and the contribution they make to the economy. The Planning Statement says that this demonstrates the strong demand for static holiday/lodge caravan pitches in England and the significant economic contribution their visitors make. In particular, it adds:

“The holiday park industry continues to respond to the developing needs of the UK holiday sector through the upgrading and improvement of parks, use of modern evolutions of the caravan in varying formats which are capable of use throughout an extended season. Despite concerns with the state of the global economy, the current domestic holiday market remains strong. Holidaymakers are tending to opt more for domestic breaks; the so-called ‘staycation’. Issues surrounding Brexit and the recent COVID-19 pandemic is further reinforcing the staycation market. One of the main factors limiting the ability of camping to meet increasing staycation demand is weather which results in a shorter tourism season. The best way to deal with our relatively short tourism season is to create more all-weather packages, truly resilient to poor weather throughout the entire year. Ashbourne Heights is ideally placed to do this having an existing swimming pool and with improved ancillary facilities and replacing camping/touring pitches with well insulated static and lodge accommodation.

Direct spending by tourists creates multipliers in the local economy, providing vital additional income for small businesses, resulting in greater economic diversity and job creation. The proposed development will therefore benefit the local economy”.

58. This is not disputed and the contribution that overnight holiday accommodation makes to the local economy is acknowledged. However, the duty to *foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park*” in carrying out these purposes is secondary to the statutory purposes of national Parks so if a development is considered to be in conflict with the purposes, the socio-economic duty must be secondary.

Impact on footpath users:

59. A public footpath crosses through the site. It would not be directly affected or obstructed by the proposal, but users will obviously have a slightly different experience from walking adjacent to a site with lodges and static caravans, rather than touring caravans. This would be even greater given that when there are no touring caravans this part of the site is empty, whereas the proposal would result in units all year round, even if they are not occupied. However, the footpath also passes through other parts of the site where there are permanent units and it has the character of a well-established holiday part, with areas of managed grass and other facilities, such as play areas. Overall, the proposal would not result in a significant change to the experience of footpath users, in accordance with Development Plan policy T6 and to the requirement of the Framework to protect tranquillity in an area which is valued for its recreational and amenity value. Derbyshire Ramblers do not object to the application.

Impact on residential amenity

60. The nearest neighbouring property is a farm to the south, which also has a camping and caravanning use. The field which is the subject of this application is on the northern part of the Ashbourne Heights site, furthest away from the neighbouring farm so there would

be no impact on the privacy and amenity of that property, so the proposal accords with policies GSP3 and DMC3.

Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Measures:

61. No specific measures are specifically proposed in the application, but the Design and Access Statement says that the new lodges and static caravans will be insulated to current requirements. LED energy efficient light fittings will minimise energy consumption, any external lighting will be aimed downwards and be switched off when not in use to minimise light pollution. Permeable gravel footpaths will help reduce water run-off from the site. Water efficient sanitary-ware will further reduce the reliance on mains water. Sustainable and local materials will be used wherever possible, supporting local businesses and minimising transportation of materials. Any excavated material from site will remain on site and be redistributed. Although these are fairly generic statements and any units are likely to be manufactured off site, given the nature of the development, this is considered to be acceptable.

Conclusion

62. It is concluded, on balance, that in this case the replacement of the seasonal touring units on part of the site with permanent, but seasonally occupied, units is acceptable as an exception to the normal policy presumption against permanent static caravans and lodges. As noted above, the site is relatively large and this part of it is well screened. It would still offer a range of accommodation and pitches on the site, thus contributing to the enjoyment of the National Park. The approval of this application would not set a precedent for further approvals on the site because this part of the site is one of the best screened and has a lawful use for a relatively long season for 38 touring units. An approval also provides an opportunity for additional landscape and biodiversity enhancements and also provides an enhancement to the quality of the tourism provision at this site.

63. There are no other site specific reasons for refusing the application.

Human Rights

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

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

65. Nil

66. Report Author: John Scott