

UPDATE REPORT (7/2008/0589/DM)

PROPOSAL	CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FOR THE SITING OF 330 STATIC CARAVANS TOGETHER WITH ANCILLARY LANDSCAPE, ACCESS, DRAINAGE AND ENGINEERING WORKS. CONVERSION OF BRAKES FARMHOUSE AND ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS TO A SITE MANAGEMENT CENTRE AND ERECTION OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO INCLUDE ANCILLARY SHOP AND OFFICE
LOCATION	LAND TO WEST OF HARDWICK PARK AND NORTH OF THE A689, SEDGEFIELD, CO. DURHAM
APPLICANT	MR M CORNEY, THEAKSTON FARMS LLP, SOUTHLANDS, THE AVENUE, EAGLESCLIFFE, STOCKTON-ON-TEES, TS16 9AS

The purpose of this Report is to provide an update to Members in respect of a number of additional consultation responses which were not referenced in the original Committee Report and also a number of responses that have been received following the preparation of the original report. In addition, the update report amends Condition 3 and Condition 22 referred to in the original Committee Report to take account of typing mistakes within the report.

The Committee Report states that a total of 48 responses were received following the formal consultation exercise. However, Members should be aware that a total of 67 responses have been received, all of which are opposed to the proposed development. The additional responses received broadly reflect the concerns raised that have been previously reported, however, in the interests of completeness, the main concerns raised through the formal consultation process can be summarised as follows:

- Car parking issues within Sedgefield;
- The proposal would constitute over development in the countryside;
- Impact on Hardwick Park and the surrounding countryside;
- The proposal will upset the tranquillity of Hardwick Park;
- Alteration of the landscape of the corridor along the A689;
- The proposed trees will block views of Sedgefield Church;
- Increased traffic congestion;
- Impact on services and facilities within Sedgefield;
- Local existing tourist accommodation at all levels has available space and, as such, there is no need for the proposed development;
- Additional jobs will not outweigh the drain on the local economy;
- Increased instances of anti-social behaviour and crime;
- The conditions of the site licence cannot be guaranteed to protect the site from a change of use at a later date;
- Access to public transport is not available at all times;
- Impact on wildlife and habitats;
- Proposed tree planting will not be effective;
- The site will be open for 11 months of the year and, as such, the caravans will be used as full time homes;
- The planning application underestimates the number of residents on site at any one time;
- Carbon footprint of the development;
- With the passage of time the site will become an eyesore;
- Increased light pollution;
- The proposal provides no benefits for locals and will blight the parklands in the long term;
- Visitors to the caravan park are likely to walk into the village at night potentially leading to them becoming involved in road accidents;
- Concern has been raised at the involvement of Durham County Council in the project and it has suggested that they may have a vested interest in the caravan park going ahead

Appendix 1 of this Report provides a detailed summary of the additional consultation responses received to take account of the responses that were not referenced within the original report.

In addition, following the issue of the original Committee Report, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) have responded verbally in respect of the application proposal. The CPRE have suggested that they would still object on the same basis as their response to the previous application as they are of the opinion that the amendments to the scheme are minimal.

As outlined above, the additional responses received broadly reflect the concerns raised that have been previously reported. However, it is considered that there are a couple of additional issues raised, which will need to be assessed:

The Proposal Provides No Benefits to Locals and will Blight the Parklands in the Long Term

The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism recognises that tourism, in all its forms, is of crucial importance to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the whole country. The application proposal seeks to provide a significant tourist accommodation facility in this location and it is considered that a scheme of this nature would result in considerable environmental, economic and social benefits for the local area. There is strong policy support for high quality rural tourism development in the region and it is considered that the application proposal would meet the relevant strategic objectives and quality criteria. The application site occupies a relatively sustainable location on the edge of Sedgefield and it is considered that visitors to the site will be able to access the town centre by modes other than the private car. The proposal will also lead to the creation of new job opportunities and the increase in visitors will provide support for local businesses.

As reported within the Committee Report, it is considered that the application proposal will preserve the historic assets in the immediate locality, including Hardwick Hall and Hardwick Park. In addition, it is considered that the proposal will result in an increased number of visitors to Hardwick Park which will help secure the long term vitality and viability of the attraction. In addition, the proposed Rare Breeds Centre will provide a complementary visitor attraction and will improve the overall attraction of Hardwick Park.

Visitors to the Caravan Park are likely to Walk into the Village at Night Potentially Leading to them Becoming Involved in Road Accidents

Durham County Council have raised no objection to the proposals in terms of highway safety and it is not considered that the proposal will lead to a significant increase in the potential for road traffic accidents involving pedestrians. There are existing pedestrian routes available to Sedgefield which would not involve crossing any main roads, most notably the A177 and A689, due to the presence of an underpass connecting Hardwick Main Park with East Park. In addition, the road network around the main entrances to the site benefits from street lighting and provides good levels of visibility for pedestrians seeking to cross the road. Furthermore, the applicant is proposing a number of highway improvement works, including the provision of dropped kerbs and the upgrade of Station Road, to improve the pedestrian environment in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Concern has been raised at the Involvement of Durham County Council in the Project and it has suggested that they may have a vested interest in the Caravan Park going ahead

Durham County Council purchased around 20 hectares of land in 1972 to create a Country Park and remain current custodians and managers of the Park. On this basis, it is considered crucial that Durham County Council should be involved in the development of any proposal located in such close proximity to the Grade II Listed Hardwick Park to ensure that any scheme respects the setting and historic assets of the Park to safeguard its long term attraction to visitors.

Conditions

It is recommended that Condition 3 and Condition 24 detailed within the original Committee Report are amended as follows:

3. The development hereby approved shall take place in strict accordance with the sequence of development set out on plans 2488.02, 2488.03, 2488.04 and 2488.05 attached to this permission and for the avoidance of doubt development shall proceed in the order Phase 1 first, Phase 2 second, Phase 3 third and Phase 4 last. For the avoidance of doubt no caravans shall be sited within Phase 2 until such time as the works identified in Phase 1 have been completed.

REASON – To ensure the orderly progression of the development

22. Prior to the commencement of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the development hereby approved and prior to the demolition of the agricultural buildings at Brakes Farmhouse checking surveys for bats, breeding birds, great crested newts, otters, water voles and badgers of that part of the site covered by the relevant phase / management centre shall be undertaken in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the scheme shall include details of appropriate mitigation in the event that these species are found to be present on site or badger setts have formed.

REASON – In order to maintain favourable conservation status of badgers, bats, great crested newts, otters, breeding birds and water voles

Conclusions

The purpose of this Report has been to provide an update to Members in respect of a number of additional consultation responses which were not referenced in the original Committee Report.

Whilst the additional consultation responses have raised some additional concerns in respect of the proposal, it is not considered that these matters would constitute issues that would warrant the refusal of the planning application. It is therefore recommended that the application is approved subject to the conditions detailed within the Committee Report and the aforementioned amendments to Condition 3 and Condition 22.

APPENDIX 1 HARDWICK PARK CONSULTATION RESPONSES (UPDATE)

Name	Address	Comments
Mildred Howell	Aingarth, West Park Lane, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary overdevelopment of the countryside in historic parkland and judging by the numbers of sites in the vicinity, would question its need; • The development will be detrimental to wildlife, visually intrusive and totally out of keeping with its surroundings and the village itself and will do nothing to enhance the area. The screening will visually change the appearance of the A689 and create a corridor and it is not considered that any amount of growth could guarantee screening in the fall or winter months; • Water pressure and sewerage problems; • Despite what the surveys say, parking is a real problem in the village; • The site will attract crime in the same way as it does at other caravan parks
Walter Howell	Aingarth, West Park Lane, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary overdevelopment of the countryside in historic parkland and judging by the numbers of sites in the vicinity, would question its need; • The development will be detrimental to wildlife, visually intrusive and totally out of keeping with its surroundings and the village itself and will do nothing to enhance the area. The screening will visually change the appearance of the A689 and create a corridor and it is not considered that any amount of growth could guarantee screening in the fall or winter months; • Water pressure and sewerage problems; • Despite what the surveys say, parking is a real problem in the village; • The site will attract crime in the same way as it does at other caravan parks
Adam Howell	48 Cunningham Court, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary overdevelopment of the countryside in historic parkland and judging by the numbers of sites in the vicinity, would question its need; • The development will be detrimental to wildlife, visually intrusive and totally out of keeping with its surroundings and the village itself and will do nothing to enhance the area. The screening will visually change the appearance of the A689 and create a corridor and it is not considered that any amount of growth could guarantee screening in the fall or winter months; • Water pressure and sewerage problems; • Despite what the surveys say, parking is a real problem in the village; • The site will attract crime in the same way as it does at other caravan parks
Nicola Brister	48 Cunningham Court, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary overdevelopment of the countryside in historic parkland and judging by the numbers of sites in the vicinity, would question its need; • The development will be detrimental to wildlife, visually intrusive and totally out of keeping with its surroundings and the village itself and will do nothing to enhance the area. The screening will visually change the appearance of the A689 and create a corridor and it is not considered that any amount of growth could guarantee screening in the fall or winter months; • Water pressure and sewerage problems; • Despite what the surveys say, parking is a real problem in the village;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site will attract crime in the same way as it does at other caravan parks
Ian Thurgood	52 Whitehouse Drive, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objections remain the same as the original proposal; The proposal is detrimental to the setting of the Grade II Listed park and Hall; The units would be intrusive and overbearing on the landscape and screening all year round cannot be guaranteed; The change of use of the site at a later date cannot be guaranteed; The traffic generated to and from the site would have a detrimental effect on both the wildlife and the Historic Country Park, this would include additional traffic on the A177 and A689, with consequent effects on access to Sedgefield Village, disturbance to the natural environment and additional parking problems in the Village; Access to public transport is not available at all times; The increased number of potential visitors identified by the developers would have a negative impact on already stretched services;
Denis F Wright	4 The Leas, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registers opposition to the development on the grounds stated in the last enquiry concerning this proposal
Margaret L Wright	4 The Leas, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registers opposition to the development on the grounds stated in the last enquiry concerning this proposal
David Vardy	Southdowns, Farfield Manor, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an intrusion into the community, constitutes overdevelopment of the area and is objectionable on the same basis as the original application even though it has had 70 lodges / chalets removed
Martin Lodge	1 Conifer Avenue, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amenities in Sedgefield cannot sustain further pressure. This development will generate additional traffic and, inevitably, there will be detrimental effects on parking within the village itself, where there are already major problems; The siting of the caravan park produces no benefits for locals and will blight the parklands project in the long term
Mrs L Denith	Badgers Green, West End, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal to site 330 caravans next to such a historic site will only destroy the tranquillity and beauty of Hardwick Park. The planting of trees will not be in keeping with the area and will not provide screening as suggested; If planning is approved and the site is not a commercial success, highly likely in the current economic climate, the land could be resold as a 'brown site' development with less restrictions for planning
Mrs S Britton	19 Maften Court, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development is out of keeping with the peaceful enjoyment of Hardwick Park; If the restored historic buildings and landscape are not to suffer from increased vandalism and misuse, there will need to be intrusive barriers when Hardwick Park is closed, and extra wardens will need to be employed; The users of the caravan park will cause disturbance to nesting birds; The application underestimates the number of residents that will be on site at any one time. Parking in the village is almost impossible already and the proposal will only add to the problem; The applicant may change the use of the land at some point in the future to the detriment of Hardwick Park; The site will be illuminated in darkness adding light pollution to the site and impact on the environment and Hardwick Park; The carbon footprint of the proposal is such that more

		<p>energy will be required to heat this site in the winter months than the whole of Sedgefield village;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns regarding the effect on services; • What guarantees are there that the site will not become neglected over time; • People from the proposed caravan park would be likely to walk from the village at night and potentially becoming involved in road accidents
David Hillerby	10 Boynston Grove, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will have a detrimental impact on wildlife in the area; • The units could be used as permanent low cost dwellings for 12 months of the year; • There is not sufficient water or sewerage services for the area to cope adequately; • Sedgefield Town has not got sufficient parking spaces to deal with the increase in traffic which this will bring
Enid Hillerby	10 Boynston Grove, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will have a detrimental impact on wildlife in the area; • The units could be used as permanent low cost dwellings for 12 months of the year; • There is not sufficient water or sewerage services for the area to cope adequately; • Sedgefield Town has not got sufficient parking spaces to deal with the increase in traffic which this will bring
Roger Hillerby	10 Boynston Grove, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will have a detrimental impact on wildlife in the area; • The units could be used as permanent low cost dwellings for 12 months of the year; • There is not sufficient water or sewerage services for the area to cope adequately; • Sedgefield Town has not got sufficient parking spaces to deal with the increase in traffic which this will bring
Phyllis Hillerby	9 The Willows, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will have a detrimental impact on wildlife in the area; • The units could be used as permanent low cost dwellings for 12 months of the year; • There is not sufficient water or sewerage services for the area to cope adequately; • Sedgefield Town has not got sufficient parking spaces to deal with the increase in traffic which this will bring
Mr R Barron	59 The Orchard, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned at the involvement of Durham County Council in the project and, up until the appeal, was not aware at how heavily they have been involved from a totally supportive standpoint in all aspects of the application • The crossover of talent from the Hardwick Park project to the Caravan Park application is particularly worrying. That Dr Anthony Martin & Mr Nick Owen can be accepted as credible witnesses when they are both part of the overall joint venture is alarming – it seems fairly clear that DCC have more than a vested interest in the Caravan Park going ahead; • Reference is made to ecology and wildlife, number of users of the caravan park, the roadways, freestanding hard areas for cars, the light impact and the constant to and fro of traffic to and from the site and within it; • Questions the presence of any evidence of national wildlife and conservation groups being invited to conduct any meaningful investigation into the impact of this venture on the fine balance of nature and the environment in the area; • Questions the ranking of Hardwick Park within North East and Co Durham visitor attraction lists and suggests a very

		<p>significant proportion of the 'visitors' to Hardwick Park are locals who visit on a regular basis, some several times a week, some of them twice a day, and are not destination visitors;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect on wildlife in the area of Brakes Farm would be hugely damaging and of great concern and a major impact on local ecology. We will lose species that have been here for hundreds of years simply to accommodate what is nothing more than a commercial project on a scale that is totally out of scale to the surrounding countryside; • Up to the 1960s Sedgefield was a relatively unspoilt rural village and since then has seen considerable growth in the housing stock and population to the point where the services are severely overstretched. • It is suggested that 40 years of growth was incapable of shielding a housing development of the same age on the edge of the village
Mr & Mrs D Hudson	32 Wellgarth Mews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size and number of units will be intrusive and overbearing on the landscape and screening cannot be guaranteed year round; • The proposal is detrimental to the setting of Grade II Listed Hardwick Country Park and Hall; • The increased traffic within the village would be hugely detrimental to both the safety and environment of the village centre and residential areas; • The increased potential number of visitors will have a significant negative impact on the already stretched local services and amenities; • The increased traffic would be detrimental to both the short and long term safety and environment of the A689 and A177 roads • The proposal jeopardises both the culture and environment of the village
Phil Wilson MP		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes there should be a balance between the requirements of change and the needs of the local community. The potential benefits to the local area are far outweighed by the detrimental effects both to the landscape and Sedgefield
Mr Wray Ellis	Parkside, Durham Road, Sedgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedgefield is already over demand in terms of traffic and parking and the proposal place an excessive burden on the existing amenities.

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