

**PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

This application is reported to Members because an objection from Evenwood and Barony Parish Council was received.

**Case Officer - Matthew Gibson**

**EVENWOOD & BARONY - 6/2008/0436/DM**

Change of use of land to enlarge existing caravan park for the provision of 15 static caravan pitches at Craggwood Caravan Park, Gordon Lane, Ramshaw for Craggwood Caravan Park (5 November 2008).

**THE SITE:**

Craggwood Caravan site is located in the valley bottom of the River Gaunless on the northern edge of Craggwood, approximately 300 metres to the south west of the southern end of Ramshaw. The site is accessed from the main road through the car park of The Bridge Inn public house, adjacent to Evenwood Bridge which crosses the Gaunless.

The site has a long standing use as a static caravan site. Recent permissions include the use of a field to the north east of the static site for touring caravans. This permission also facilitated the erection of an amenity block on the south west edge of the touring caravan site, adjacent to the existing dwelling on the site. Also in 2002 permission was granted for the erection of a site recreational building, which is currently under construction. In 2006, conditions relating to specific opening periods were removed by permission granted at an appeal hearing. These conditions were replaced with a new holiday use condition.

**THE PROPOSAL:**

This application seeks planning permission for the change of use of land to provide 15 additional caravan pitches. The site currently has permission for 120 static pitches within the part of the site known as Craggwood Leisure and 40 touring pitches on the part of the site known as Riverside.

**PLANNING HISTORY:**

- 2006/0168 – Variation of conditions to provide 10.5 months operating season was refused but allowed at appeal. (2005/0537 – Previous application was withdrawn)
- 2002/0426 – Application approved for erection of a site recreation centre.
- 2001/0318 – Approval granted for a touring caravan site, extensions to the existing bungalow and a new toilet block, workshop and store.

A number of further applications for the site have been determined between 1975 and 2001 which have formed the site as it stands today.

## **PLANNING POLICY:**

GD1 General Development Criteria  
TR3 Camping, caravan and chalet sites in the countryside  
ENV1 Protection of the Countryside  
ENV8 Development affecting a protected wildlife species

## **REPRESENTATIONS:**

### **Statutory and Internal Consultees:**

Evenwood Parish Council – Totally oppose this application for 15 extra caravans because of the increase in traffic and possible alcohol related anti-social behaviour.

County Highways – No highway objection

Environment Agency – Objections withdrawn (comments summarised in the report)

Natural England – Proposals unlikely to have adverse impact on protected species. A number of conditions suggested and included.

### **Public Responses:**

This application was advertised but no objections were received.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:**

Principle  
Impact on visual amenity  
Impact on protected species  
Flood risk  
Impact on residential amenity and traffic

### **Principle**

This application seeks approval to extend the current caravan site by the change of use of an area of land to the West of the existing site. This extension will provide an extra 15 static caravan pitches to the static part of the site which currently has a licence to accommodate 120 static pitches. Policy TR3 of the Teesdale District Local Plan supports applications for caravan sites so long as the site fulfils a number of criteria. It is recognised that the development of caravan sites within countryside locations can have a detrimental impact on the landscape. Therefore careful consideration must be paid to ensure that sites do not detract from the appearance of the surrounding landscape. As this site is an existing caravan park, the impact of a change of use of an additional area of land should be considered against the cumulative increase in impact of the site. Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) suggests that “planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to proposed extensions to existing tourist accommodation where the scale of the extension is appropriate to its location and where the extension may help to ensure the future viability of such businesses”. In the case of a caravan park, the number of caravan pitches would, in most cases, be determined by market demand. Should the demand not be available then the site would not be looking to expand, so weight should be afforded to associated material considerations. This use in a countryside location is also supported by policy ENV1 of the Local Plan, provided that

the proposed use does not unreasonably harm the landscape and wildlife resources of the area.

### **Impact on visual amenity**

PPS7, paragraph 39 (iii) states that planning authorities should “ensure that new or expanded sites are not prominent in the landscape and that any visual intrusion is minimised by effective, high-quality screening. The area proposed forms a small part of the overall site and appears as a natural extension when viewed from the existing caravan park. There is a natural change in height of the land to the rear or north of the site along where the hedge line currently stands. This means the caravan site, which is already low in its surroundings, benefits from the natural screening of the topography, combined with the existing and mature vegetation on this boundary. To the south of the site the river is bounded by mature woodland, which creates a green backdrop to the site, thus helping to blend the starkness of caravans within the countryside location. It is considered that no additional landscaping is required as the existing natural screening is sufficient. Conditions have been included to ensure the retention of the hedge on the northern boundary of the site.

### **Impact on protected species**

As the site is in close proximity to a number of potential habitats where protected species could be present, a protected species report was submitted to accompany the application. Policy ENV8 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that development which may cause significant harm to protected species would not be permitted unless mitigation is achievable and the overall effect will not be detrimental to any species. The report concluded that “the development site itself has few features likely to attract wildlife; however it lies adjacent to the River Gaunless”, which means, “a number of mitigation activities will be undertaken to reduce any impacts from the development upon local wildlife”. Natural England have been consulted and concluded that the proposal is unlikely to have an adverse effect in respect of species especially protected by law. A number of conditions relating to the suggested mitigation and sympathetic working methods have been included, which will ensure the ecology of the area is protected.

### **Flood Risk**

After initial objections from the Environment Agency related to potential flood risk and issues surrounding drainage on the site, the objections were withdrawn. Drawing CL100, a Topographical Survey of the site, shows that the proposed site is at a higher level than the existing caravan park. The proposed site therefore lies within Flood Zone 1 and does not require a Flood Risk Assessment under PPS25: Development and Flood Risk. Sufficient information has now been provided by the applicant to allow the EA to fully assess the proposals. An informative has been included which states that under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991, prior written consent of the EA will be required for the discharge arrangements proposed for the site.

### **Impact on residential amenity and traffic**

Concerns were raised by the Parish Council in respect of potential increase in traffic flow and also “the fact glass and bottles are left in the Ramshaw play area alcohol is being drunk in this play area”. Highways have raised no objection to the proposed extension of the site. As the site enjoys the benefit of permission to open throughout the year it would be difficult to assert that the increase 15 further static caravans would have a detrimental impact on residential amenity. The site currently has permission for a

total of 160 static and touring caravans. The park also has permission for its own recreational facilities within the site and already benefits from play facilities. It would be difficult to differentiate whether the use of Ramshaw Play Area was by occupants from the caravan site and also whether the proposed increase of 15 static caravans would increase this problem. The applicant has submitted further information in this respect. It should also be noted that no objections were received from neighbouring properties or from members of the public within the local area.

**PLAN Nos AND DATE RECEIVED:**

CL000 – Site location plan (5/11/08)

CL100 – Topographic Survey & proposed layout (5/11/08)

CL200 – Proposed site plan (5/11/08)

**RECOMMENDED: That Planning Application be approved subject to the following conditions**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details contained in the application as submitted to the Council on the date specified in Part 1 of this decision notice unless otherwise firstly approved in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

To ensure the development is carried out in complete accordance with the approved plans.

3. The caravans shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall not be occupied as a person's sole or main place of residence. The operators of the caravan park shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all owners of caravans on the site and their main home addresses and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

To ensure that the development is not used for permanent residential accommodation in accordance with Policy GD1.

4. No development shall take place unless in accordance with the mitigation detailed within the protected species report 'Cragwood Caravan Park, Ecological Risk Assessment, December 2008,' including, but not restricted to adherence to timing and spatial restrictions; provision of mitigation in advance; undertaking confirming surveys as stated; adherence to precautionary working measures.

To conserve protected species and their habitat.

5. No trees should be felled on the site unless a checking survey for bats is undertaken and any appropriate action deemed necessary by the consultant is carried out in accordance with their recommendations.

To conserve protected species and their habitat.

6. The hedge on the North side of the site is to be retained.

To conserve protected species and their habitat.

7. Any groundworks, including the clearance of vegetation etc must be carried out before the start of March to avoid impacts on breeding birds. A suitably qualified ecologist should undertake a checking survey to ensure that the area is nest free before the commencement of work.

To conserve protected species and their habitat.

8. Prior to commencement of development the river bank must be fenced off from the approved caravan site with a minimum buffer of 5 metres. This fencing should then be retained for the duration of development.

To conserve protected species and their habitat.

9. No external illumination shall be erected on the approved site until specifications have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with these agreed details.

To conserve protected species in accordance with policy ENV8 of the Teesdale District Local Plan

## **INFORMATIVES**

The developer should ensure that no pollutants enter the watercourse. Standard working practices must be put in place, ensuring that materials are carefully stored away from the river course. This must be strictly adhered to.

Within any surface water drainage system there should be no un-attenuated surface water discharged into the watercourse. Should this be the case the EA must be consulted.