

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Area Planning Committee (South and West)** held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Spennymoor on **Thursday 18 April 2013 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor M Dixon (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Tomlinson (Vice-Chairman), D Boyes, M Campbell, K Davidson, J Gray, G Richardson, P Taylor, R Todd and J Wilkinson

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Burn, G Holland and M Williams

Also Present:

A Caines – Principal Planning Officer

A Inch – Principal Planning Officer

N Carter – Legal Officer

D Stewart – Highways Officer

1 Declarations of Interest (if any)

6/2013/0028/DM – Teesdale Barnard Castle Club Site, Lartington Lane, Barnard Castle

Councillor Davidson stated that he was a member of the Caravan Club and was advised by the Legal Officer that this was not a registerable or non-registerable interest and he was able to take part in the discussion and decision.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

3 Applications to be determined

3a 6/2013/0028/DM - Teesdale Barnard Castle Caravan Club Site, Lartington Lane, Barnard Castle

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding an application for the extension to Teesdale Barnard Castle Caravan Club site to provide 54 new pitches, erection of toilet block and associated infrastructure (for copy see file of Minutes).

A Caines, Principal Planning Officer gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site. Members had visited the site earlier that day and were familiar with the location and setting.

In presenting the report the Officer advised that condition 12 should be removed as the works to lay the geosynthetic overlay matting on the highway verge of the B6277 had already been paid for and programmed to be carried out by the Council in the week commencing 28 May 2013.

Councillor R Bell, local Member was not in attendance but had provided detailed representations against the application. In summary the local Member's main concerns were about the further intrusion into open countryside, the impact on other existing caravan sites and the safety of pedestrians on the B6277 to and from Barnard Castle. He also questioned the figures submitted by the applicant in relation to the benefit to the local economy, and the lack of information on the need for additional sites within Teesdale. A copy of Councillor Bell's full submission was circulated to Members, Officers and the objectors for consideration (for copy see file of Minutes).

Ian Jerred spoke on behalf of Lartington Parish Council against the application. The Parish Council's objections related to road safety, the effect on the natural and historic landscape and the level of economic benefits claimed by the Caravan Club.

Road safety issues were of concern not only to the local County Councillor, Cotherstone Parish Council and the residents of Eggleston, Startforth and Brignall, but also to the users of the site. There were a number of reviews on the Caravan Club's website about the dangers the road posed for pedestrians and also from traffic backing up onto the highway. The Parish Council acknowledged the commitment to improve the verge but it was narrow in many places, there were blind corners, narrow bridges and awkward crossing points.

The Parish Council also regretted the further loss of land of high landscape value and were concerned about the impact of the development on the rich heritage of the area, an area described as "an important historic landscape that provided a notable gateway to the upper dales of Teesdale and the AONB." The location of the existing site adjacent to an important tourist route into Teesdale was already detrimental to the quality of the landscape and its tranquillity, and further development would make the situation worse.

In terms of economic benefits the Parish Council believed that the £3.2m annual benefit to the local economy claimed by the applicant could not be substantiated. Whilst there would be some benefit to local shops, catering outlets, tourist venues and transport providers, the Parish Council did not believe that they would be as great as promised.

Mr N Hammond, local resident reiterated the views expressed by the local Member and the Parish Council. He considered that the figures provided by the Caravan Club in terms of economic benefit were largely anecdotal and based on poor and little site specific information. Whilst there would be some benefit to the local economy much of this would be accrued to the applicant. Lartington and

Cotherstone already had well established locally owned caravan sites which were well positioned and away from roads and public view. The proposed 56 new pitches would affect the income of these sites.

If approved the site would effectively create a settlement greater in size and larger in population than Lartington village, with minimal screening immediately adjacent to the main road into Teesdale.

Mr Hammond continued that he was concerned with the comments in the report relating to the setting of designated heritage assets and impacts on archaeological remains which he believed were contrary to the NPPF and Planning Policy. The archaeological assessment was inadequate and the applicant should be required to provide the results of a trial excavation. The proposals were inconsistent with an application at a caravan site at Bolam when an appropriate condition had been attached. If the application was approved he asked that Planning Officers give consideration to including a condition requiring archaeological works.

To conclude he stated that residents had been consulted on a Parish Plan for Lartington in 2005. At the time residents and their families had expressed the view that they did not want new or drastically enlarged caravan sites.

D Stewart, Highways Officer responded to the concerns expressed in relation to road safety. Whilst he acknowledged the observations made about the safety of pedestrians walking to and from Barnard Castle, in highway terms it was considered proportionate to reinforce the highway verge with geosynthetic matting. Concerns expressed in relation to traffic queuing back onto the B6277 would be addressed by the proposed improvements to the existing site entrance.

The Principal Planning Officer addressed the comments made in relation to the impact on heritage assets. The application accorded with paragraph 128 of the NPPF and had been accompanied by a desk based archaeological assessment. The site was likely to consist of a historic field system with some identified earthworks linked to ridge and furrow, however these were not as pronounced or of the same quality as those within Lartington Hall's parkland. This had been evident on the Member's site visit earlier that day. The application was an extension to an existing site which had not been subject to such a stringent archaeological assessment. It would therefore not be proportionate to request further archaeological works.

In deliberating the application Councillor Richardson concurred with the views of the Parish Council stating that the B6277 was an extremely fast and dangerous road. If approved the application would also have a detrimental impact on other local caravan site businesses.

Councillor Dixon referred to the recent report by Lord Adonis which highlighted the need to promote tourism in the North East. It was pleasing to note that there were a number of caravans on the site mid-week and that the site was well-maintained and well-screened. This was the type of facility needed to encourage tourism. Should there be a need for archaeological works in future these could be carried out with minimal intrusion. The extension to the site would create additional employment

and the concerns in relation to road safety had been addressed by the Highways Officer.

Councillor Campbell supported Councillor Dixon's views in relation to supporting tourism in the area. In his submission Councillor Bell had made reference to the impact on existing local businesses but there had been no evidence provided to support this, nor had the other caravan sites offered any objections.

Having listened to the representations made by the local Member, objectors and Officers, Councillor Davidson stated that in his experience visitors to the caravan site would purchase their supplies from the local area. The Caravan Club had 375,000 members and as a listed Club site a lot of extra business would be brought into the area. He also felt that the views of the Highways Officer should be taken into account.

Following discussion it was **Resolved:**

That the application be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report with condition 12 being removed.

3b 7/2013/0087/DM - Former Tetley Distribution Depot, Unit N791, Grindon Way, Aycliffe Industrial Estate, Newton Aycliffe

The Committee considered a report of the Principal Planning Officer regarding an application for the change of use from general storage (B8) to general industrial use (B2) including external alterations and the formation of new access (for copy see file of Minutes).

A Inch (Principal Planning Officer) gave a detailed presentation on the application which included photographs of the site.

In discussing the application Councillor Dixon who was a local Member in the neighbouring division welcomed the proposals and congratulated the applicants on their increased productivity. He noted the comments of Great Aycliffe Town Council in relation to landscaping but agreed with Officers that existing planting already existed in the location and it was not necessary to include any additional landscaping measures.

Councillor Wilkinson also welcomed the proposal stating that it would bring an empty factory unit back into use and Councillor Boyes added that it was pleasing that staff numbers had grown from 5 to 68 since 2008.

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the conditions outlined in the report.