

# Planning Services

## COMMITTEE REPORT

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### APPLICATION DETAILS

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**APPLICATION NO:** 3/2011/0128

**FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:** REPLACEMENT OF STATIC CARAVAN WITH CHALET

**NAME OF APPLICANT:** MR ALAN BELL

**ADDRESS:** WHITEGATES CARAVAN PARK, LANDS BRIDGE , WESTGATE, BISHOP AUCKLAND, DL13 1SN

**ELECTORAL DIVISION:** WEARDALE

**CASE OFFICER:** Adam Williamson  
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### 1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

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- 1.1. Planning permission is sought for the replacement of an existing static caravan with a "Park Home" chalet at the above site. The proposed chalet would still be for the purposes of holiday accommodation. The proposed chalet would be a Wessex Homes 'Hardy' chalet and would measure 12.2 metres in length by 6 metres in width, 2.9 to the eaves and 4.1 to the ridge. The proposed chalet would have a rendered finish with a tiled roof.
  - 1.2. The application site lies approximately 500 metres south east of Westgate in the open countryside and within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is known as Whitegates Caravan Park, which appears to have been used for the siting of caravans since the 1960s. The site currently contains just 1 static caravan, which is in a poor state of repair. Adjacent and to the east of the site is another existing static caravan park, containing 5 caravans. The site is bounded to the highway by a 1 metre high stone wall, with a 5 bar gate to the access. To the northern boundary are mature trees which screen the existing caravan on the site. The nearest neighbouring dwelling is Lands Farm, which is approximately 80 metres to the north.
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- 1.3 This application has been reported to Committee as the applicant is a County Councillor.

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## **2.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

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- 2.1 In 1961 the site was granted a site licence for 4 caravans. Planning application 1GX13/274 (1961) was returned as the local planning authority considered that there was already an established caravan use on the site and therefore planning permission was not required for the 4 caravans.

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## **3.0 PLANNING POLICY**

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- 3.1 NATIONAL POLICY:
- 3.2 **Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development** sets out the Governments overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning System.
- 3.3 **Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas** sets out the national policies specific to planning in rural areas.
- 3.4 **Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism:** Sets out the national guidance on applications and documents related to the tourism industry.
- 3.5 REGIONAL POLICY:
- 3.6 **The North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008**, sets out the broad spatial development strategy for the North East region for the period of 2004 to 2021. The RSS sets out the region's housing provision and the priorities in economic development, retail growth, transport investment, the environment, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. Some policies have an end date of 2021 but the overall vision, strategy, and general policies will guide development over a longer timescale.
- 3.7 **Policy 8 – Protecting and Enhancing the Environment**, seeks to maintain and enhance the quality, diversity and local distinctiveness of the environment throughout the North East. Members should be aware that the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) wrote to all Local Planning Authorities on 27th May 2010, advising of his intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies. Both the RSS and the stated intention to abolish are material planning considerations and it is a matter for each Planning Authority to decide how much weight can be attached to this stated intention, having regard to the evidence base which informs the RSS.
- 3.8 LOCAL PLAN POLICY:
- 3.9 **Policy GD1 (General Development Criteria):** All new development and redevelopment within the District should be designed and built to a high standard and should contribute to the quality and built environment of the surrounding area.
- 3.10 **Policy ENV1 (Protection of the Countryside):** The District Council will seek to protect and enhance the countryside of Wear Valley.
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- 3.11 **Policy ENV2 (The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty):** Priority will be given to the protection and enhancement of the landscape qualities of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Development which adversely affects the special scenic quality and the nature conservation interest of the AONB will not be permitted.
- 3.12 **Policy TM1 (Criteria for Tourist Proposals):** The Council will give encouragement to schemes which provide tourism facilities in the District provided they accord with criteria set out in the local plan.
- 3.13 **Policy TM2 (Tourism within the AONB):** Tourism development proposals within the AONB will be allowed only if they fulfil the criteria set out in the local plan.
- 3.14 **Policy TM6 (Redevelopment of Caravan Parks):** Within existing caravan sites the replacement of static caravans with chalets will be permitted providing it fulfils the General Development Criteria, Policy GD1.

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*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/government/en/1020432881271.html> for national policies; <http://www2.sedgefield.gov.uk/planning/WVCindex.htm> for Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.*

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## **4.0 CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES**

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- 4.1 **STATUTORY RESPONSES:** Highways Authority state that in traffic generation terms there is no material difference between the proposed chalet and static caravan to be replaced, and therefore has no objection.
- 4.2 Environment Agency: Has assessed the application as having a low environmental risk.
- 4.3 **INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:**
- 4.4 Ecology: No objection.
- 4.5 **PUBLIC RESPONSES:**
- 4.6 This application was advertised by site notice and letters were sent to neighbours. There has been 1 objection for the following reasons:
- Concerns over permanent occupancy. The proposal will invariably become a permanent dwelling.
  - Any new building should reflect the character of the area. This is a standard off the peg chalet.

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## **5.0 APPLICANTS STATEMENT**

- 5.1 The applicant has chosen not to provide a statement.

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*The above represents a summary of the comments received on this application. The full written text is available for inspection on the application file which can be viewed at Crook Area Office.*

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## **6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT**

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6.1 In assessing the proposals against the requirements of the aforementioned policies, and having regard to all material planning considerations, including representations received, it is considered that the principle of development, impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and ecological impacts represent the principle material planning considerations.

### **6.2 Principle of development**

6.3 Planning Policy Statement 7 and the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism recognises that tourism and leisure activities are vital to many rural economies. Improving the standard of accommodation and appearance of tourist facilities is important in this respect. Saved policy ENV1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by the Saved and Expired Policies September 2007 supports development in countryside locations for tourism and recreation related activities where the proposal conforms with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

6.4 This site is already long-established as a caravan site. The proposal would simply replace one form of holiday accommodation (static caravan) for another upgraded form of holiday accommodation (proposed chalet), thereby improving the standard of accommodation and arguably the appearance of the site.

6.5 However, In order to ensure the chalet is used for holiday accommodation and not as the occupier's main residence, it would be appropriate to impose an occupancy condition restricting the use of the chalet to holiday accommodation only. This would be in accordance with the guidance contained in the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism.

6.6 Subject to an up to date holiday occupancy condition to prevent permanent living accommodation, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

### **6.7 Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area**

6.8 Saved policy TM6 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by the Saved and Expired Policies September 2007 indicates that permission will be granted for holiday accommodation in the countryside where (amongst other things) it does not detract from the character of the area and is adequately screened by topography or existing trees within the control of/managed by the applicant. As the site lies within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the provisions of policy ENV2 also apply.

6.9 The proposed chalet would replace an existing static caravan. The existing static caravan is in a poor condition and is considered to detract from the overall appearance of the site and character of the area. The proposed chalet is larger than the existing static caravan but it is still a typical form of holiday accommodation and is commensurate in scale with the site. The type of accommodation proposed is by its nature temporary and this is reflected in the materials. It would not be appropriate to insist on the use of more typical local materials such as stone or brick as this would make the structure permanent. Notwithstanding the details of materials submitted, it is suggested that a condition has been included requiring the submission samples of materials proposed for the chalet for agreement to prevent the use of unacceptable materials.

6.10 The site does benefit from dense natural screening around all sides including the

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relatively new planting on the southern and eastern boundary. It is however, currently visible for a brief time during the winter months. The natural topography of the site adequately screens the site from the main trunk road through Westgate (A689) and the nearby villages; and the combination of landform and landscaping creates an effective screen from long distance views. The dark roof materials of the proposed chalet would reduce the prominence of the chalet and once the chalet has 'weathered' the development should appear comfortable within its natural surroundings.

6.11 Therefore, it can be concluded that the site would be adequately screened by topography and trees and would cause no significant harm to the character or appearance of the surrounding area in accordance with policy TM6, ENV1 and ENV3 of the Local Plan

## 6.12 Other issues raised

6.13 The objection received relating to the permanent occupancy and design have been discussed in the report.

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## 7.0 CONCLUSION

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7.1 The proposal is to upgrade existing holiday accommodation on an established caravan site through the replacement of a static caravan in poor condition with a transportable Park Home chalet. The use of the site for holiday accommodation is therefore already established, and subject to the requirement for an occupancy condition to ensure the chalet would be used for holiday accommodation only, there are no objections in principle to what is intended.

7.2 In respect of any potential impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and AONB, it has been concluded that the scale of the proposal is acceptable and because the site would be adequately screened by topography and trees there would be no significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and AONB in accordance with saved policies TM6 and ENV2 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan.

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## 8.0 RECOMMENDATION

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

### Conditions:

1. The development should not be begun later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the following approved plans:

<b>Plan Ref No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
	Site Location Plan	13.04.2011
J**** - 0	Proposed elevations	13.04.2011

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3. The chalet shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall not be occupied as a person's sole or main place of residence.
  4. Notwithstanding any details of materials submitted with the application no development shall commence until samples of the external walling and roofing materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

**Reasons:**

1. 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. To define the consent and ensure that a satisfactory form of development is obtained.
3. In order to ensure that the timber chalets are used for holiday purposes only and are prevented from becoming a sole or main residence in accordance with policy GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by the Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.
4. In the interests of the appearance of the area and to comply with policies GD1, ENV1 and ENV2 GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by the Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.

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## **9.0 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

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1. The development was considered acceptable having regard to the following development plan policies: -  
  
GD1 (General Development Criteria):  
ENV1 (Protection of the Countryside):  
ENV2 (The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty):  
TM1 (Criteria for Tourist Proposals):  
TM2 (Tourism within the AONB):  
TM6 (Redevelopment of Caravan Parks):
2. In particular the development was considered acceptable having regard to consideration the principle of development and impact on the surrounding area.
3. The objection received were not considered sufficient to lead to refusal of the application as, on balance, the positive visual tidying of the site and the element of increased tourism proposal out weight the potential negative impacts on the landscape at this particular location.

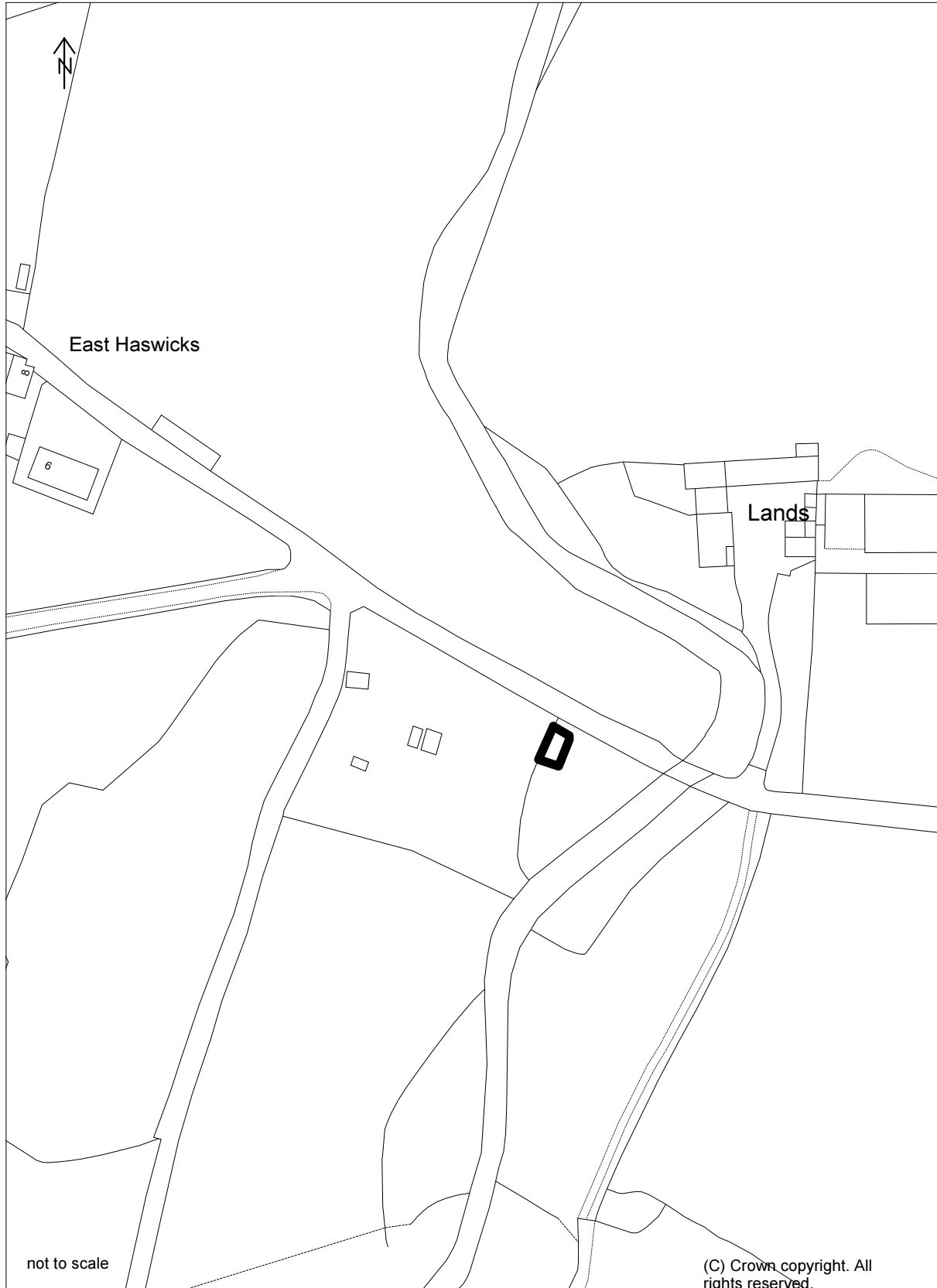
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## **10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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- Submitted Application Forms and Plans
- Design and Access Statement
- Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007
- RSS for the North East
- Planning Policy Statements/Guidance, PPS1, PPS7
- Consultation Responses
- Public Consultation Responses

**3/2011/0128 - REPLACEMENT OF STATIC CARAVAN WITH CHALET AT  
WHITEGATES CARAVAN PARK, LANDS BRIDGE, WESTGATE FOR MR ALAN BELL**



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