

AGENDA ITEM NO: 8/2(d)

Parish:	Methwold	
Proposal:	Change of Use of land from agricultural to leisure (D2)	
Location:	Cherry Tree Farm Thornham Road Methwold Norfolk	
Applicant:	Tracy Peckham	
Case No:	18/01729/CU (Change of Use Application)	
Case Officer:	Mrs C Dorgan	Date for Determination: 22 November 2018

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Called in by Councillor Lawrence

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

This application is seeking consent for the change of use of an area of agricultural land to leisure (D2). The applicant is intending to use the site for a maximum of 6 log cabins, camp site for up to 12 pitches, petting farm and 2 fishing lakes, however this detail does not form part of this application.

The site is located outside the development boundary for the village of Methwold, which is categorised as a joint Key Rural Service Centre (with Northwold) in the adopted Local Plan (specifically the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMP).

This application sits alongside application 18/001730/F for the Retention of caravan for temporary residential use, and application 18/01791/F for Retention of access track and entrance walls.

Key Issues

- * Principle of development
- * Form and Character
- * Highways/ Access
- * Other material considerations.

Recommendation

REFUSE

THE APPLICATION

This application is seeking consent for the change of use of an area of agricultural land to leisure (D2), the site is 5.8ha in total and is identified on the Location Plan submitted with the

Planning Committee
7 January 2019

application. The applicant is intending to use the site for a maximum of 6 log cabins, camp site for up to 12 pitches, petting farm and 2 fishing lakes, but only minimal detail identifying the broad location of the fishing lakes, lodges and camping area has been submitted. No information has been submitted regarding the petting farm in terms of scale and location.

The site is located outside the development boundary for the village of Methwold, which is categorised as a joint Key Rural Service Centre (with Northwold) in the adopted Local Plan (specifically the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMP).

The site is on land designated as countryside in the adopted Local Plan. It is within the 10m buffer of a county wildlife site, and also has a gas pipeline across the site.

This application should be considered alongside two other applications on this site, brought before Planning Committee. Application 18/001730/F for the Retention of caravan for temporary residential use, and application 18/01791/F for Retention of access track and entrance walls both of which are to serve the change of use proposed.

SUPPORTING CASE

The adjacent site to the west of the application site is known as the Thornham Lake fishing and holiday cottages site. It was granted planning permission in 2006 for use as a commercial fishing lake and siting of log cabins. In April 2017 a further planning permission was granted for an additional six holiday lodges and a managers dwelling. The planning officers and Committee both approved this application against a recommendation for refusal from County Highways. The officer's report to Committee stated "On balance it is considered that given the fact that Thornham Road is not in high demand, there have been no traffic incidents within the last seven years of operation, there are some informal passing points along the most likely route to the site and the application is for the expansion of a rural enterprise which is to be encouraged, officers believe that an approval can be recommended."

The 'most likely route to the site' is from Severalls Road. Although this is a single width carriageway, as the planning officer observed before, it is not in high demand. In fact, it is in very low demand. On various recent occasions, the route has been driven in order to see what happens when encountering other traffic. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to monitor that event, because no other traffic has been met. It was observed, however, that between the Severalls Road junction and the site entrance, (a distance of just under 1 kilometre or 0.6 miles) there are eight informal passing places, gateways or field entrances, which provide passing provision.

It was also observed that, owing the very nature of Thornham Road, traffic speed was around 20 - 25mph along this stretch of roadway and that excellent visibility was available at the Thornham Road/Severalls Road junction.

It is typical with the type of accommodation provided, that holidaymakers will remain on the site for most of their stay and that arrival and departure times vary considerably. It is unlikely that there would be a sudden "rush hour" of traffic trying to get in and out of the site. The applicants intend the site to be heavily orientated toward provision of facilities for disabled and frail clients, to be able to pursue a fishing hobby in specially adapted facilities. Additionally, it is intended to make special provisions for disabled or under-privileged children to stay at the site, to enjoy the countryside and mix with the petting farm animals. Such visits would involve only a single minibus travelling to and from the site for the duration of the stay.

It is, therefore, suggested that the additional traffic generated by the proposal development would not create a problem.

Para 109 of the NPPF states that “Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

It is not considered that this would be the case if this development was allowed.

PLANNING HISTORY

18/01791/F: Retention of access track - Cherry Tree Farm Thornham Road

18/01729/CU: Change of Use of land from agricultural to leisure (D2) - Cherry Tree Farm

18/01730/F: Retention of caravan for temporary residential use - Cherry Tree Farm

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council: SUPPORT

Highways Authority: OBJECT. As we have previously advised the applicant at an informal stage NCC would not support the use of this site for leisure because Thornham Road is not considered to be suitable for habitual increases in traffic.

As the applicant’s agent acknowledges within their statement Thornham Road is of single track width. Thornham Road does not have formal passing provision for the significant majority of its length and additionally it is of poor construction has narrow verges and ditches to its sides. I also observe that despite our informal advice the applicant has not demonstrated provisions or an ability to provide any new formal passing area to help mitigate against their development. Cars when meeting would therefore be required to reverse in some cases long distances to locate an area to pass or squeeze past each other on unstable verges.

I note that the applicant puts weight on the principle that Thornham Road is not in high demand which was the basis on which the LPA approved previous applications in connection to neighbouring fishing lakes. You will be aware that NCC were not however in agreement with that approval and I am of the firm opinion that an approval of this application can only lead to further intensification of traffic on this road, given that 6 holiday cabins, two fishing lakes and a petting farm are planned. This will clearly increase the likelihood of two vehicles meeting and alter the demands on the road.

It would appear from the information submitted that there would be limited services on site and therefore travelling to and from the site is likely to be common. I also observe that the applicant is likely to pursue later facilities on the site. I am of the firm view that any site visit made will find that the road conditions are not suitable and an approval of the application would result in conditions to the detriment of highway safety. I therefore recommend the application is refused

Cadent Gas: NO OBJECTION to the proposal in principle.

- There is a high pressure pipeline local to the proposal, the pipeline has a 19.7m ‘Building Proximity Distance’ (BPD) applicable, Cadent Gas will object to any building that is sited within this distance of the pipeline.

- The high pressure pipeline is classed as a 'Major Accident Hazard Pipeline - High Pressure' and is sited within the HSE consultation zones.

HSE: OBJECTION The application has been put through the HSE Land Use Planning (LUP) process, and consequently the HSE advises against the granting of planning permission in this case, on safety grounds.

CSNN: NO OBJECTION I have no objection the principle of the proposed end use for the siting of holiday cabins, camping, fishing and the farm animal petting. I am not requesting any conditions at this stage based on the final paragraph of the Planning Statement dated 24 September 2018 which states this application is purely to establish the change of use and that the actual facilities and site design will be subject to a further planning application.

As advised at the pre-app stage (18/00030/PREAPP) we would need to see full details on surface water drainage, foul drainage and external lighting, as well as storage of waste and recycling at any future application stage.

Foul water drainage is something which could generate a refusal from this team at a later stage, if it could not be proved that foul water could be safely treated and disposed of – we do object to rural nonmains camping or lodge sites etc due to concerns over the potential for failure of treatment systems during the winter period due to non-use, as bacteria die without a constant supply of food resulting in untreated waste water being discharged. I note that a Falcon Wastewater Treatment System was proposed previously which states the bacteria are supplied with food even when there is little or no wastewater coming in, such as during low use and holiday periods. This appears to be a suitable plant and should be considered in any future application.

Environmental Quality: No comments.

IDB: No comments.

REPRESENTATIONS No comments made.

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS10 - The Economy

CS11 – Transport

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES PLAN 2016

DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM11 – Touring and Permanent Holiday Sites

DM15 – Environment, Design and Amenity

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Planning Practice Guidance - Provides National Planning Practice Guidance, in support of and in addition to the NPPF

National Planning Policy Framework – sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The issues for consideration include:

- Principle of development
- Form and Character
- Highways/ Access
- Other material considerations.

Principle of development

The site is located outside the built extent of the village of Methwold, approximately a mile to the north west of the built extent of the settlement. It is categorised as a joint Key Rural Service Centre (with Northwold) in the adopted Local Plan (specifically the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMP)). There is a development boundary for the village however the site is some distance from this and is classed as being within the countryside.

Policy DM2 Development Boundaries (SADMP) specifies that areas outside development boundaries will be treated as countryside where new development will be restricted and limited to that identified as suitable in rural areas by other local plan policies; including CS10.

Policies CS06 Development in Rural Areas and CS10 The Economy (Core Strategy (CS)) support the rural economy and provide a flexible approach to employment generating development. Policy CS10 supports the development of new tourist accommodation subject to certain criteria. Policy DM11 (SADMP) expands on this and sets out location requirements for new holiday accommodation sites; which include a requirement that the site can be safely accessed.

Form and Character

The form and character of the locality is rural in nature, with a similar type of development located on the neighbouring site to the west. This proposal is for the change of use of the land from agricultural land to leisure. At this stage there is insufficient information to assess the likely impact of the development on the countryside, because the scale of development is unclear. While an approximate number of cabins and pitches are provided, there is no information on the siting of these, the extent of the lakes and petting farm, and the specific use of the remainder of the site. The applicant states that the intention is that the detail would follow in a subsequent application. However this is not satisfactory as the full impact of the proposal cannot be assessed.

Highways/ Access

The Local Highway Authority has objected to the proposal on the grounds that Thornham Road is not considered to be suitable for habitual increases in traffic. As the applicants agent acknowledges within their statement Thornham Road is of single track width, with no formal passing provision for the significant majority of its length and is of poor construction with narrow verges and ditches to its sides. The applicant has not demonstrated an ability to provide any new formal passing area to help mitigate against their development. Cars when meeting would therefore need be required to reverse in some cases long distances to locate an area to pass or squeeze past each other on unstable verges.

The applicant puts weight on the principle that Thornham Road is not in high demand which was the basis on which a previous application in connection to neighbouring fishing lakes was approved. The Local Highway Authority were not in agreement with this approval. However the holiday use was already established and the Planning Committee made reference to the fact that this was the expansion of a rural enterprise which is to be encouraged.

The approval of this application would lead to further intensification of traffic on this road, increasing the likelihood of two vehicles meeting and alter the demands on the road. It would appear from the information submitted that there would be limited services on site and therefore travelling to and from the site is likely to be common.

The Local Highway Authority is of the firm view that any site visit made will find that the road conditions are not suitable and an approval of the application would result in conditions to the detriment of highway safety. The scheme is therefore contrary to the NPPF and Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy.

Other material considerations

The site is within Flood Zone 1 and therefore a FRA is not required. The application site is also within the vicinity of a high pressure gas pipeline, although Cadent Gas and HSE have no objections to the scheme. There are no further objections raised from consultees.

CONCLUSION

The proposed scheme would be located within the countryside and while the general principle of holiday accommodation may be considered acceptable, this development does not meet the requirements of Local Plan policies.

Critically, there is a lack of information provided regarding the scale of development proposed and the site layout. The nature of the development and the potential impacts cannot be properly assessed based on the very limited information provided.

Furthermore, the Local Highway Authority has objected to the scheme due to inadequate access to the site, and the applicant is unable to provide a reasonable solution to address these concerns.

Consequently the proposal is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS06 and CS10 of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Adopted Core Strategy 2011 and Policies DM2, DM11, and DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016.

In light of National Guidance, Development Plan Policies and other material considerations Planning Permission for the development to be refused.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason(s):

- 1 The unclassified road serving the site is considered to be inadequate to serve the development proposed, by reason of its restricted width / lack of passing provision . The proposal, if permitted, would be likely to give rise to conditions detrimental to highway safety. Contrary to Development Plan Policies CS11 and DM11.
- 2 Insufficient information has been submitted as part of the planning application, and as a result the impact of the proposed development cannot be properly assessed against the adopted Local Plan policies. It is therefore contrary to the NPPF, Core Strategy Policies CS06 and CS08, and Development Management Policies DM11 and DM15.