

AGENDA ITEM NO: 8/2(d)

Parish:	Northwold	
Proposal:	Retrospective change of use of land for siting of up to 19 glamping pitches	
Location:	Oak Lodge Thetford Road Northwold Norfolk	
Applicant:	Miss C Neale	
Case No:	21/00289/CU (Change of Use Application)	
Case Officer:	Lorna Gilbert	Date for Determination: 6 May 2021 Extension of Time: 18 June 2021

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Cllr Tom Ryves called in the application to Committee.

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

The application site is a grass field containing mature trees and hedgerows and is located on the north-western side of Mill Drove and to the south of Thetford Road (A134).

It is a retrospective application for the siting of up to 19 glamping pitches with associated toilet/wash area and coffee shop. The glamping bell tents hold between 4-6 persons and parking is available next to each tent. The campsite is open from April to October and the tents are taken down at the end of each season. There is existing water and electric at the site.

The Highway Authority objects to the application on highway safety grounds due to the intensification of the junction between Mill Drove and the A134.

Key Issues

Principle of development
Highways implications[H1]
Form and character
Impact upon neighbouring properties
Other material considerations

Recommendation

REFUSE

THE APPLICATION

The application site is located on the north-western side of Mill Drove, which is an unbound single track road that links to the A134. The site lies outside Northwold's development boundary.

The application site consists of a grassed field with mature trees and hedgerows. The application is retrospective for up to 19 glamping pitches and associated washing facilities and coffee shop. The glamping bell tents hold between 4-6 persons and parking is available next to each tent. The campsite is open from April to October and the tents are taken down at the end of each season. There is existing water and electric at the site.

SUPPORTING CASE

The applicants purchased Oak Lodge, Mill Drove in 2002 and given the location of the site they decided to develop a 'glamping' enterprise to include the siting of up to 19 glamping pitches with associated WC/shower and washing up facilities. It is noted that the submitted plan also labels a coffee shop on site. In 2016 the applicants started a business with 6 caravans and 6 glamping tents and they now have up to 19 pitches available.

A Transport Statement submitted does not consider that the level of traffic generated by the proposal would be significant or create any new accident problems on the local highway network.

The Highway Authority disagrees with the findings in the Transport Statement. They have recommended the application be refused on highway safety grounds because the proposal would lead to an intensification in the use of an access onto the A134, which is a busy principle route and would cause undue interference with the safe and free flow of traffic on this important traffic route.

PLANNING HISTORY

Recent and relevant planning history:

Reference Number: 12/00980/CU, Decision Date: 03-DEC-13 - Application Permitted - Continued use of land for storage and maintenance of big tops and equipment associated with the entertainment industry - Oak Lodge, Thetford Road, Northwold

Reference Number: 16/02177/CU - Application Withdrawn - Change of use of land for the siting of 6 caravans and 6 permanent (glamping) tents - Part Retrospective. - Oak Lodge, Thetford Road, Northwold

Reference Number: 19/00416/F, Decision Date: 06-JUN-19 - Application Permitted - Proposed replacement dwelling - Oak Lodge, Thetford Road, Northwold

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council: NO OBJECTION

Support the application.

Highways Authority: OBJECTION

The A134 Thetford Road has not been downgraded in its importance and function since the previous application of 16/02177/CU. Whilst the speed restriction has been reduced from 60mph to 50mph, in the interest of highway safety, the speed of traffic still remains high and the highway safety impacts are a significant safety consideration and accord with the considerations of the NPPF.

Mill Drove itself does not form part of the adopted road network. There is mention of alternative access being provided onto the B1112 to the south. However, it is anticipated that the route to the south would be at a lower level i.e. less traffic, given the greater and slower distance to be travelled to gain access the wider road network. On average we would expect a camping facility to generate between minimum of 2 – 4 vehicle trips per day with the result that a minimum of 38 vehicle trips would be anticipated for the application which could rise to 76.

The site is said to support other permitted class uses. However this application does not appear to be linked or of the same level and therefore the traffic generated would be new and an intensification.

The matter that accidents have not been recorded in the last five years at the A134 junction with the application site is a matter of good fortune and or is likely to be a reflection of its existing low impact which would be altered should the application be approved.

The nation has been under associated Covid 19 restrictions through 2020 and therefore I would suggest that the applicants Trip data submitted would not be a typical representation of events. The statement suggests a view that the increases in slowing, stopping and turning would not have a significant impact on the A134. However, the Highway Authority remains of a different view and believe that an impact of between 38 - 76 would create conditions to the detriment of highway safety. It is of note that safety concerns for single dwellings (which have average trip levels of 6 movement per day) have been recommended for refusal, supported by the LPA and supported where challenges of appeal have been sort on roads of this nature.

The development of this site would ultimately result in increases in slowing stopping and turning movements on the A134 to the detriment of highway safety. Therefore, it is recommend that the application is refused as the proposal would lead to an intensification in the use of an access onto the A134, which is a busy principle route and would cause undue interference with the safe and free flow of traffic on this important traffic route. Contrary to Development Plan Policies CS11.

Environmental Health & Housing - Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION

Contaminated Land - No comment.

Air Quality - No objection.

Natural England: NO COMMENT

Natural England has not assessed this application for impacts on protected species. The consultation documents indicate that this development includes an area of priority habitat, as listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

The lack of comment from Natural England does not imply that there are no impacts on the natural environment, but only that the application is not likely to result in significant impacts on statutory designated nature conservation sites or landscapes. It is for the local planning

authority to determine whether or not this application is consistent with national and local policies on the natural environment.

Public Rights of Way: NO OBJECTION

No objection in principle, however it is highlighted that access to the site will be via the Public Right of Way known as Northwold Restricted Byway 11. This does not offer any means of public vehicular access and it is not maintainable at the public expense to a vehicular standard. It would be expected that any damage caused to the Restricted Byway by the exercise of the private rights remains with the rights holders to repair. The full legal extent of this Restricted Byway must remain open and accessible for the duration of the development and subsequent occupation.

REPRESENTATIONS

Cllr Tom Ryves: "I would like to call this application in as Oak Lodge is a local business and the recent application for Wellington Lodge was agreed after debate. I think the issues of access need to be discussed in public."

One item of correspondence in **SUPPORT** of the proposal:

- They will continue to add to the local economy and it will help support our local business.

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS10 - The Economy

CS11 - Transport

CS12 - Environmental Assets

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

DM2 – Development Boundaries

DM17 - Parking Provision in New Development

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
National Design Guide 2019

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development
- Highways implications
- Form and character
- Impact upon neighbouring properties
- Other material considerations

Principle of development

The application is within the countryside as defined by the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Local Development Framework - Core Strategy 2011 (CS) and is located around 800 metres from Northwold's development boundary. Along with Methwold, Northwold is classed as a Key Rural Service Centre and has a good range of services and facilities. The application site is also around 550 metres from the edge of Brookville which is classified as a Smaller Village and Hamlet within the CS.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF supports sustainable rural tourism which respect the character of the countryside. Paragraph 84 of the NPPF also advises that planning decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Policy CS10 of the CS recognises that tourism industries are key elements of the economic and social vibrancy of the borough, and contribute to the regeneration and growth of the area. It further advises that the Council will promote opportunities to improve and enhance the visitor economy by supporting tourism opportunities throughout the borough and in particular supporting smaller scale tourism opportunities in rural areas to sustain the local economy providing these are in sustainable locations and are not detrimental to our valuable natural environment. The Council will permit the development of new tourism accommodation in rural areas subject to the following criteria being met:

- It should be located in or adjacent to our villages and towns;
- It should be of a high standard of design in line with national guidance;
- Will not be detrimental to the landscape;
- Mechanisms will be in place to permanently retain the tourism related use.

The proposal would not be located within or adjacent to the nearby villages of Northwold or Brookville. Additionally, there is no footpath or cycle path along Mill Drove or the adjoining section of the A134 that leads into Northwold. Although there is a footpath on The Avenue which joins Mill Drove to the south, it would have to be reached via Mill Drove which has no

footway. Furthermore, this leads to Brookville which does not offer everyday services and facilities. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that this is a sustainable location, as visitors would rely heavily on private motor vehicles. However, it should be balanced against the rural nature of the location set within open countryside which would appeal to tourists wishing to escape from urban areas. The pitches are in the form of bell tents with associated washing facilities. The site operates between April and October and the tents are taken down at the end of the season, consequently the tents themselves are temporary structures which would help to lessen their visual impact upon the landscape, although this will be considered later in the report.

Policy DM11 of the SADMPP refers to proposals for new holiday sites not normally being permitted unless:

- The proposal is supported by a business plan demonstrating how the site will be managed and how it will support tourism or tourist related uses in the area;
- The proposal demonstrates a high standard of design in terms of layout, screening and landscaping ensuring minimal adverse impact on visual amenity and the historical and natural environmental qualities of the surrounding landscape and surroundings; and
- The site can be safely accessed;
- It is in accordance with national policies on flood risk;
- The site is not within the Coastal Hazard Zone indicated on the Policies Map, or within areas identified as tidal defence breach Hazard Zone in the Borough Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Environment Agency's mapping;

Proposals for uses adversely affecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or European Sites will be refused permission.

A business plan has been provided which demonstrates the profitability of the business. It argues it is of benefit to the local economy with customers using local shops, pubs and attractions and that the applicant promotes local things to do. They also provide locally made charcoal. Furthermore, tents and tent furnishings are kitted out from local shops. During the glamping season part of the site is preserved for low lying wild flowers and nest boxes provided. The tents are well spaced out across the site and will be taken down part of the year when the site is rested. Site access will be considered later in the report. The site is within flood zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding. Although the site is within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, Natural England envisage that the proposal is unlikely to result in significant impacts on statutory designated nature conservation sites or landscapes.

Consequently, on balance the principle of the change of use to a glamping site as proposed, is considered acceptable providing it meets all necessary material considerations and relevant planning policies considered below.

Highway implications

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF refers to local businesses not having an unacceptable impact on local roads. In reference to new holiday sites, Policy DM11 of the SADMPP will not normally be permitted unless the site can be safely accessed.

According to Policy CS11 of the CS, development proposals should demonstrate that they have been designed to:

- Reduce the need to travel.

- Promote sustainable forms of transport appropriate to their particular location and related to the uses and users of the development. In order of preference this should consider:
 - Walking
 - Cycling
 - Public transport
 - Private car (development proposals which are likely to have significant transport implications will need to be accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan to show how car based travel can be minimised)
 - Provide for safe and convenient access for all modes.

As it has been established that visitors are likely to be heavily reliant on private transport, it is important that private vehicles do not cause highway safety issues. The Highway Authority anticipates a camping facility would generate a minimum of 2-4 vehicle trips per day which would result in a minimum of 38 vehicle trips, which could rise to 76. There are two routes from the application site, both along Mill Drove which is a single track lane.

There is an alternative access from Mill Drove to the south which links to The Avenue and the B1112 Methwold Road, which has a 40mph speed limit. However, it is anticipated most vehicles would travel northwards towards the A134 as it is closest to the wider road network and Northwold has a greater range of services and facilities. According to data in the Transport Statement the Annual Average Daily Traffic recorded nearest the application site on the A134 is 5998 vehicles per day. This road has been reduced to a 50mph speed limit, is unlit and has no footway near the junction with Mill Drove.

The Highway Authority has objected to the proposal on the grounds that it would result in an increase in slowing, stopping and turning movements on the A134 which is a busy principle route, to the detriment to highway safety and would lead to an intensification in the use of an access on to this road.

The site has previously been in agricultural use, however it is considered the intensification of the site for up to 19 glamping tents would lead to more transport movements than its previous use.

Although there have been no accidents recorded in the last five years at the A134 junction with Mill Drove, it does not overcome the highway safety concerns that the proposal would be unsafe and could result in potential traffic accidents.

There is sufficient space on site to accommodate a suitable car parking provision for visitors.

Given the reliance on private vehicles for the change of use of the site to glamping, it is considered that it would lead to an intensification in the use of an access onto the A134, which is a busy principle route. Consequently, this would cause undue interference with the safe and free flow of traffic on this important traffic route and is contrary to Policy CS11 of the CS, Policy DM11 of the SADMPP and Paragraph 84 of the NPPF.

Form and character

The proposal comprises of up to 19 glamping tents spread across the site with an associated washing block and coffee shop. The application site is set back from Thetford Road (A134) and Methwold Road (B1112) with trees and hedgerows screening much of the site. A mature established tree belt and hedgerow limits the site's visibility from Mill Drove. Furthermore, the tents would be removed for around 5 months of the year when the campsite is not in operation. Consequently, the temporary nature of the tents, along with the

scale, appearance and position of the proposal would not have a significant effect on the rural character of this locality.

The proposal would comply with Policy CS06 of the CS and DM15 of the SADMPP insofar as form and character.

Neighbours' living conditions

The application site is in an isolated setting within the countryside surrounded by agricultural land and wooded areas. A school and house are located nearby, situated between the site and the A134. These buildings are separated from the application site by fields and vegetation. There are buildings, including in residential use, within the applicants ownership to the south-east of the glamping site. However, these are well screened by existing trees and hedgerows. Given the position of these nearest neighbours and the scale of the proposal, they would not experience harm in terms of loss of light, outlook or privacy. Car parking is provided on site and consequently there should be no additional car parking pressure on nearby roads.

The proposal would comply with Policy CS08 of the CS and Policy DM15 of the SADMPP in this regard.

Other material considerations

Access to the site is via a Public Right of Way (PROW) known as Northwold Restricted Byway 11. It does not offer public vehicular access and is not public maintained to a vehicular standard. Any damage caused to this PROW remains with the rights holders to repair. As this is a separate legal matter, it is recommended that an informative be imposed if the application was deemed to be acceptable.

There is no evidence that the site contains protected and priority species. The proposal is for a change of use and therefore does not involve the removal of existing trees or hedgerows. The applicant has incorporated some conservation measures such as an area for wild flowers and nest boxes and furthermore the site would be rested for part of the year. From the information provided, it is considered the proposal would be consistent with Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 with respect to priority habitats.

Crime and disorder

The proposal would not give rise to any issues relating to crime and disorder.

CONCLUSION

Although the application has been considered acceptable with respect to the overall principle of the change of use, its form and character and neighbours living conditions, it however would result in the intensification of use of the access road and junction of Mill Drove and the A134, which is a principle route. On balance, it is therefore considered the proposal would result in harm to highway safety and would conflict with Policy CS11 of the CS, Policy DM11 of the SADMPP and Paragraph 84 of the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposal would lead to an intensification in the use of an access onto the A134, which is a busy principle route and would cause undue interference with the safe and free flow of traffic on this important traffic route. It would therefore be contrary to Policy CS11 of the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Local Development Framework - Core Strategy (2011), Policy DM11 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (2016) and Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework with respect to highway safety.