

Stansted Downs **559902 160887** **4 November 2011** **TM/11/03055/FL**

Proposal: Section 73 application to vary the conditions of TM/01/02373/FL to allow the use of touring units on a year round basis with the original condition 4 of TM/01/02373/FL remaining in force in respect of the 30 approved static caravans (TM/01/02373/FL being Variation to condition (v) of planning permission TM/81/886 to allow siting of 150 touring and 30 static caravans, and winter storage of 50 touring and 30 static caravans)

Location: Thriftwood Caravan And Camping Park Plaxdale Green Road Stansted Sevenoaks Kent TN15 7PB

Applicant: Thriftwood Holiday Park

1. Description:

1.1 Members will recall this application was initially reported to the 29 February meeting and a Member Site Inspection was held on 30 March 2012. A number of questions were raised which will form the basis of this report. The 29 February main and supplementary reports are annexed.

2. The Site:

2.1 This is as described in the annexed report.

3. Planning History:

3.1 This is as described in the annexed report.

4. Consultees:

4.1 No further responses have been received.

5. Determining Issues:

5.1 These are largely as described in the annexed report. The NPPF has been published in the meantime and its main provisions relevant to this application is as follows:

- Paragraph 17 (Core Principles) requires LPAs to protect the Green Belts, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it
- Paragraph 28 requires LPA support for sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include

supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres

- Paragraph 125 requires LPAs to make decisions that limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

5.2 Issues raised by Members at the previous Committee meeting, and those that arose at the Members Site Inspection, are as follows.

External Lighting

5.3 There have been local complaints about lighting installed by a previous owner which have been the subject of negotiation with Planning Enforcement Officers. All lighting units on the site are now being replaced with a modern design which cowl the light downwards effectively and should minimise the impact of lights being seen in the wider countryside. Lights which previously floodlit the fenced storage compound have been removed and the applicant has orally advised that security lights are no longer needed as a different method of security will be implemented.

5.4 In my view, given the satisfactory outcome that has been secured to this enforcement investigation through negotiation, there is now no expediency to take formal planning enforcement action regarding the lights at the site.

Sizes of pitches

5.5 Since the 2001 planning permission, the precise positioning of caravans as per the layout on BB/THRIFTOWDD/01/01 (see para 1.1 of the 29 February report) has inevitably been altered to reflect the different management of the various owners since that date. With regard to the siting of caravans, the condition only specifically requires the static vans to be sited in the “grey shaded area” on the drawing. This is being complied with.

5.6 There is no similar requirement in the condition that controls the precise location of the pitches for the tents, touring caravans or campervans. The applicant acknowledges that the needs of the continental tourists means that pitch sizes have increased in some parts of the site and some hardstandings have been laid in the form of a type 1 base. However, whilst this may as a consequence reduce the number of caravans accommodated on site, he wishes to retain flexibility to adapt to future customer requirements. Whilst it may be the case that some of the operational development involved requires planning permission, other elements would be “permitted development” by virtue of Site Licence conditions and, taking account of the level of wider impact that this has, it is my view that there is no expediency to take planning enforcement action in this regard.

Landscape Screening

- 5.7 The Landscape Officer has visited the site and advises that a mixture of holly and yew would be appropriate evergreen native planting for the site edges but that because they are slow growing, these would ideally be supplemented with laurel bushes for more short term evergreen screening.

Hilltop Caravan site.

- 5.8 This was granted planning permission for the stationing of 20 caravans in 1961. There were no conditions. The site licence is also for 20 caravans.

Decking/Patios

- 5.9 Members noticed that many of the static caravans have raised decking and/or hard surfaced patios. These would need planning permission but they are generally typical. I understand that some will have been in existence for more than four years and will therefore have become lawful. In all those circumstances it is not considered expedient to seek planning applications.

Satellite Dish on Tree

- 5.10 This has now been removed.

Conclusion

- 5.11 My recommendation on the application remains to approve the application in accordance with what appears to be a consistent approach by Inspectors on the application of national policy for tourism development of this nature which remains the "Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism". I have, however, taken this opportunity to rationalise the condition and make it more intelligible.
- 5.12 Again, I recommend that the landscaping (as suggested by the Landscape Officer) be the subject of an informative.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 **Grant Planning Permission** as detailed by: Email dated 11.01.2012, Design and Access Statement dated 04.11.2011, Supporting Information dated 04.11.2011, Location Plan 001 dated 04.11.2011, subject to:

Conditions / Reasons

- 1 (a) The number of pitches on the site shall be restricted to a maximum of 150 for touring units (including touring caravans, campervans, motorhomes and tents) and 30 static caravan units;

- (b) the 30 static caravan units shall be located only on that part of the site shown cross hatched on the drawing attached to this permission;
- (c) the use of the site for occupation of the static units shall be restricted to the months of January and from March to December inclusive in any one calendar year;
- (d) the pitches for touring units shall be located only on that part of the site shown single hatched on the drawing attached to this permission;
- (e) any touring caravans being stored on the site shall be located either within that part of the site shown single hatched on the drawing or in the area annotated at "Storage Area";
- (f) at no time shall the total number of caravans on the site (including those that are occupied, available for occupation and stored) exceed 180.

Reason: In the interests of safeguarding the visual amenities of the site, which falls within the open countryside, the Metropolitan Green Belt and because an over intensive use of the site could give rise to additional undue highway hazards, in accordance with paragraphs 17 and 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Policies CP1, CP3, CCP14 and CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007.

- 2.
 - (i) the caravans shall be occupied for holiday purposes only
 - (ii) the caravans shall not be occupied as a person's sole, or main place of residence;
 - (iii) the owners/operators shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all owners/occupiers of individual caravans on the site, and of their main home addresses, and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the site is not used for unauthorised permanent residential occupation which would be inappropriate in the Green Belt or outside settlement confines and so thereby contrary to paragraphs 17 and 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Policies CP3 and CP14 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007.

Informatives

- 1. It is suggested that additional peripheral planting be undertaken to screen the site's caravans and lights from the rural locality especially from Plaxdale Green Road and Labour-in-Vain Road. Ideally this should be holly and yew on the site boundary with some planting of laurel.

Contact: Marion Geary