

**East Malling &
Larkfield**
East Malling

569696 155180 24 August 2015

TM/15/02789/FL

Proposal: Change of use of land from agriculture/horticulture to caravan storage facility
Location: Land Adjoining Woodside 431 Wateringbury Road East Malling West Malling Kent ME19 6JQ
Applicant: Mrs Sylvia Stevens

1. Description:

- 1.1 This application proposes the change of use of existing agricultural land to the open storage of caravans. It is proposed to store up to 100 caravans on an area of approximately 0.7ha. Access is proposed to be gained from the recently constructed vehicular entrance. No areas of hardstanding are proposed but the land is to be enclosed by a security fence with a native hedgerow planted outside to screen the site.
- 1.2 Planning permission was previously refused for a similar proposal last year. However, that proposal was for an area of 1.77a (much larger than now proposed). The previous planning application was refused for the following reason:

“The proposed open storage of caravans and the associated fencing and CCTV cameras would, by virtue of its scale and siting in an area of countryside as defined in the Tonbridge and Malling Local Development Framework, be detrimental to the rural character of the area and therefore would be contrary to paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Policies CP1 and CP14 of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007.”

2. Reason for reporting to Committee:

- 2.1 Due to the nature of the proposal and the history of the site.

3. The Site:

- 3.1 The site is an area of open agricultural land to the east of Wateringbury Road. The land is relatively flat and is partially screened from Wateringbury Road by a belt of managed sweet chestnut coppice. The nearest residential properties are to the south at 431 Woodside Road and to the north east at Hillberry Farm. The houses at Heath Park are opposite.

4. Planning History (relevant):

TM/13/02479/FL Approved 25 November 2013

A new entrance and cross over from the Wateringbury Road to an adjoining copse and into a field

TM/15/01460/FL Refuse 31 July 2015

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5. Consultees:

- 5.1 PC: Object – the addition of native hedging and reduction in site area do not overcome the objection that the proposal would be detrimental to the countryside.
- 5.2 KCC (H+T): No objection in principle. The applicant may wish to consider wheel washing to reduce the potential for mud on the highway.
- 5.3 Private Reps: 5 + site notice/OS/OX/OR

6. Determining Issues:

- 6.1 The main considerations in respect of this application surround the principle of the change of use from agricultural land to the open storage of caravans and the visual impact on the character of the area. The previous reason for refusal is an important material consideration and the revisions put forward in this submission must be considered to be sufficient in overcoming the previous ground of refusal if Members are to grant permission now.
- 6.2 The site is located outside any defined settlement confines and is designated as open countryside. Policy CP14 of the TMBCS restricts development in the countryside, although certain exceptions apply including allowing for development which would secure the viability of a farm or any development for which a rural location is essential.
- 6.3 I understand that the land to which the application relates has previously been used for the growing of hay, however this is proving difficult to sell and so consequently the landowner is looking to diversify into other areas. Although not directly part of a wider farm diversification scheme it is considered that the size and nature of the area of storage would not harm the overall functioning of the rest of the wider holding and therefore in terms of the principle meets the requirements of policy CP14.
- 6.4 Turning to the visual impact of the proposed development (upon which the previous reason for refusal centred), Policy CP1 of the TMBCS requires that new development should protect and enhance the natural environment. This is also supported by Paragraph 109 of the NPPF which states that development should

protect and enhance valued landscapes. This current application has substantially reduced the overall amount of land subject to the change of use which immediately reduces the visual impact. Whilst security fencing is still proposed, a scheme of soft landscaping has been put forward which would provide screening to the fencing and the stored caravans themselves which is welcomed. The precise nature of the landscaping can be secured by planning condition. An element of screening is also afforded by the existing sweet chestnut coppice along the eastern side of Wateringbury Road which assists in containing the site in visual terms.

- 6.5 Additionally, no lighting is proposed to the compound and only the entrance gate would be monitored by CCTV thus further limiting the visual impact of the development.
- 6.6 The scheme now proposed would therefore have very limited impact on the character and amenities of the locality and would not, in my view, cause such harm as to justify the refusal of planning permission.
- 6.7 In terms of how the use might impact upon highway safety and residential amenity, I am mindful that no objection has been raised by KCC and am aware that the type of use is such that it would not result a significant increase in traffic along Wateringbury Road to the detriment of highway safety. As no hardsurfacing is proposed, the applicant can be advised by way of an Informative of the need to ensure mud is not deposited on the public highway.
- 6.8 The site is well removed from the nearest residential properties and planning conditions concerning how the site operates can be imposed in order to control activities, limiting any disturbance encountered, in the interests of residential amenity.
- 6.9 In light of the above assessment, on balance, I consider that the proposal has sufficiently overcome the previous reason for refusal and meets the requirements of national and local policy, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions. The following recommendation is therefore put forward:

7. Recommendation:

- 7.1 **Grant Planning Permission** in accordance with the following submitted details: Letter dated 24.08.2015, Design and Access Statement dated 24.08.2015, Location Plan 1503/02 (C) dated 24.08.2015, Block Plan 1503/01 dated 24.08.2015, subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping, fencing and boundary treatment. All planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be implemented during the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being seriously damaged or diseased within 10 years of planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with trees or shrubs of similar size and species, unless the Authority gives written consent to any variation. Any boundary fences or walls or similar structures as may be approved shall be erected before first occupation of the building to which they relate.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality.

3. The number of caravans to be stored on the site at any one time shall not exceed 100 and at no time shall be stored outside the application site as shown on drawing no. 1503/02 (C) dated 24 August 2015.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

4. The site shall be used solely for the storage of unoccupied touring caravans and for no other purpose including maintenance/repair work.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

5. No caravans shall arrive or depart within the application site outside the hours of 19:00 to 07:30 hours unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

6. The site shall be used for the storage of towed domestic touring caravans only.

Reason: To prevent the introduction of a more commercial level of storage in the interests of rural amenity.

7. No external lighting shall be erected within the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

Informatives

1. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure, before the development hereby approved is commenced, that all necessary highway approvals and consents where required are obtained
2. To avoid the potential for mud to be spread onto the highway, the applicant should consider providing a wheel washing facility within the site.

Contact: Robin Gilbert