

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

James Mead
Development Management
East Hertfordshire District Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

4th December 2019 (by email)

Dear Mr. Mead,

Application No 3/19/2299/FUL
Change of use of agricultural land to a holiday touring park incorporating 36 caravan spaces, siting of a Shepherd's Hut to provide W.C. and Shower facilities, provision of a new access track and associated landscaping works.
On land adjacent to 1 Model Cottages, White Stubbs Lane, Bayford, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire EN10 7QA

While accepting the intent in both the National Planning Policy Framework and the East Herts District Plan to encourage tourism within rural areas, CPRE Hertfordshire have concerns regarding this proposal.

The Design and Access Statement and Green Belt Statement erroneously refer to the 2012 iteration of the NPPF. In the following we refer to the current 2019 version.

The applicant makes the case that the NPPF considers that provision for outdoor recreation is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that as touring caravans are transient, they will have no impact on the openness of the Green Belt. However the NPPF is silent on the subject of touring caravans. It is a moot point whether or not caravanning constitutes a form of outdoor recreation. If it is accepted by the Council that it does, NPPF paras 145 and 146 are clear that such provision is only acceptable "*as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.*" The replacement of open fields with touring caravans, towing vehicles, tents, and access roads could not be regarded other than compromising openness notwithstanding the fact that the use is to some extent transitory in nature. (Case law has determined that car parking is held to impact on openness even though the parking of vehicles is transient.) Though not mentioned in the application it is also likely some security lighting will be provided and night time light pollution generated which also impacts on openness. As a result this part of the Green Belt would be less open than at present.

In preparing a Green Belt Statement, the applicant, in effect, acknowledges this position, but states that "*The site is set within a fully screened site and cannot be seen from without. ... there is no detrimental visual impact upon the locality or any public rights of way. ... and therefore does not harm or compromise the openness of the Green Belt.*" At

present the site is completely open on two sides. A Public Right of Way (PROW25) runs up the entire eastern boundary of the site and a further, non-designated footpath along the northern boundary. The Design & Access statement says these will be screened by extensive landscaping (para 3.03), but there is no mention of how long it will take until that landscaping matures to the extent that the site is screened. Until that takes place the views across the site will remain and the openness of the Green Belt compromised.

Consequently the applicant is required to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist to clearly outweigh this harm to the Green Belt.

The applicant does not overtly specify or identify what the very special circumstances are, but does present the case that the proposal will boost the local economy and facilitate tourism by providing a high quality attraction. There is no doubt that the development would result in some benefit to the local economy. All tourism proposals do this to some extent; it is neither exceptional nor special. However no evidence of need or demand has been provided for this type of tourist accommodation in the area.

We have concerns regarding other aspects of the application. The site is bounded on two sides by ancient woodland in the form of Broxbourne Woods National Nature Reserve and the Wormley-Hoddesdon Park Wood SSSI. The provision of this facility will generate significantly greater vehicle and pedestrian movements for most of the year. It is likely that this will be to the detriment of wildlife. There is no assessment of this accompanying the application. In fact Para 5.2 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal clearly states that *“once all surveys have been completed and the development plans finalised, the report must be converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment where details of further survey results, mitigation and biological enhancement are included to arrive at an assessment of the residual impact.”* This does not appear to have been done.

Paragraph 3.2 of the Transport Statement says that *“routes to key local facilities and amenities are conducive to walking / cycling.”* We do not accept this statement. It is a considerable distance in either direction along White Stubbs Lane to retail facilities where food and other basic amenities can be purchased. White Stubbs Lane is unlit and has no footways on either side and is clearly not amenable to pedestrian use.

Within the site itself there are also issues. Sanitary facilities are restricted to the ‘Shepherd’s Hut’. The hut as shown is raised off the ground and accessed by three steps. Despite a statement that the site will be fully accessible by the disabled (Design and Access Statement paras 2.06) there is no demonstration of how a disabled person can access sanitary facilities in the hut.

Nor is there mention of either water or electrical supply to the caravan bays. The law dictates that no touring caravans shall be connected to a mains electrical supply unless it is done with a single campsite electrical hook up cable, which in itself can only be installed after being approved by the local planning authority. There is no reference to this in the application, or a plan showing the proposed route of such a cable.

Given the omissions in the application documentation, we urge the Council to reject this application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving