

The application is for full planning permission for the retention of an extension to an existing caravan park. The extension is used for a maximum of 18 caravans, for both storage and as an extension to the existing caravan holiday park.

The application site lies within the open countryside and within an area of Landscape Maintenance, as indicated by the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The application has been called in to Committee by two Councillors as the site would help to promote visitors to the area, supporting many visitor attractions in the area. In addition many people have difficulty finding suitable local storage facilities for their caravan after the summer season.

**A decision on the application was deferred at the meeting of the Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> September to enable the Committee to visit the application site. This report has been revised principally to take into account new material received since the previous report was prepared on the 28<sup>th</sup> August.**

**The 8 week period for the determination of this application expired on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**(a) REFUSE for the following reason:**

- 1. The proposed development is not in a sustainable location and it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will provide enhanced economic benefits through the provision of employment or the support of local rural business. In addition the proposal would adversely harm the landscape quality of the area and as such there is no justification to set aside local and national policies which seek to safeguard the countryside for its own sake. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies ASP6, CSP1, CSP3, CSP4 of the Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006 -2026; Policies N17 and N19 of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.**

- (b) The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships be authorised to issue enforcement and all other notices and to take and institute on behalf of the Council all such action and prosecution proceedings as are authorised by and under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the removal of the caravans from the site within three months.**

#### **Reason for Recommendation**

The proposed development is not in a sustainable location and it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will provide enhanced economic benefits through the provision of employment or the support of local rural business. In addition the proposal would adversely harm the landscape quality of the area and as such there is no justification to set aside local and national policies which seek to safeguard the countryside for its own sake. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies ASP6, CSP1, CSP3, CSP4 of the Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006 -2026; Policies N17 and N19 of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

As the use has already commenced it is considered appropriate, given the harm that has been identified, to take appropriate enforcement action to secure the removal of the caravans from the site.

## **Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application**

Discussions were held with the applicant, however the application is considered to be an unsustainable form of development and is therefore contrary to the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

### **Key Issues**

This application is for full planning permission for the retention of an extension to the existing caravan site at Bar Hill Villa, Bar Hill Road, Onneley. The applicant states that a limited number of 18 caravans for touring and storage purposes are sited on the extended part of the site.

The site is located behind an existing touring caravan site which fronts the main A525. The existing caravan site was granted planning permission in 1999 and provides a touring site and winter storage for 24 caravans.

There is an existing access to the site, therefore no further access point from the A525 is proposed. The applicant proposes to plant Silver Birch and Mountain Ash trees on the mounds surrounding the site to provide screening.

Planning permission was refused in 2010 for a storage area for 47 caravans on the site. This application was refused for the following reason:

*The proposed development is not in a sustainable location and it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will provide enhanced economic benefits through the provision of employment or the support of local rural business. In addition the proposal would adversely harm the landscape quality of the area and as such there is no justification to set aside local and national policies which seek to safeguard the countryside for its own sake. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies D1, D2, D4, T1A, NC1 and NC2 of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996 - 2011; Policies SP1, ASP1, CSP1, CSP3, CSP4 of the Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006 -2026; Policies N17 and N19 of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011; the guidance in the Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan "Planning for Landscape Change", and the aims and objectives of PPS1, PPS7 , PPG13 and the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism 2006.*

The Inspector dismissed the appeal, concluding that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the countryside, and there were no material considerations that would outweigh this harm.

Since the appeal was dismissed, National Planning Policy Statements have been replaced with the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan has been revoked. This report will consider the effect of these changes in policy and whether this now makes the development, which is of a similar nature, acceptable, along with taking into account the reduction in the number of caravans being stored and used on the touring park.

The main issues in the consideration of the application are:

- Is the proposal acceptable in terms of its impact on the form and character of the area and area of Landscape Maintenance?
- Would there be any adverse impact on residential amenity?
- Is the proposal acceptable in terms of highway safety?
- Do the adverse impacts of the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole?
- Recommended enforcement action

Is the proposal acceptable in terms of its impact on the form and character of the area and the impact on the Area of Landscape Maintenance

The caravans are already being stored and used at the site, in addition to the existing site adjacent to Bar Hill Road. The site is an area of crushed stone and is enclosed by low grassed mounds. The site lies within the open countryside and a Landscape Maintenance Area, as indicated by the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. Policy N19 of the Local Plan states that, in Landscape Maintenance Areas, the Council will seek to maintain the high quality and characteristic landscape, and where development can be permitted, it will be expected to contribute to this aim, with it being necessary for development not to erode the character or harm the quality of the landscape.

Prior to being used for the storage of caravans and as a holiday park, the site was used for general storage, parking for haulage vehicles with plant and equipment, maintenance of these vehicles and other vehicles and equipment such as earth moving vehicles, tractors and equipment, storage of building equipment and materials, laying of hardstanding and access roads. This use was granted in 2012 under reference 12/00333/ELD via an Existing Lawful Development Certificate, as the applicant was able to demonstrate that this use had been carried out for at least 10 years. It is important to note that the site would have been being used for this use during the application and planning appeal for the caravan storage in 2010/2011, so the Planning Inspector would have seen the site being used as such but still found the proposed use for storage of caravans to be unacceptable.

The reduction in the number of caravans since the previous application will reduce the overall impact of the use on the wider landscape, however the caravans would still be conspicuous, being generally white/ light coloured and would still have a detrimental impact, detracting unacceptably from the character and appearance of the countryside. It is very difficult to incorporate caravans into the countryside and landscape due to their light colour. Landscaping would take time to establish, and the existing low bunds do not fully screen the caravans from wider views. The site has restricted visibility from the road, however there are public rights of way which run adjacent to the site and the caravans are visible to users of the public right of way.

The area is rural in character, and it is considered that the reduction in the number of caravans would not overcome the reasons for dismissal of the appeal in 2011. This site is viewed within the context on the existing lawful touring caravan site which is visible from the highway as well as the public right of way. The Inspector, in dismissing the appeal in 2011, concluded that the proposal would serve only to erode the rural character further and consolidate the cluster of non agricultural operations. It is considered that, despite the potential for additional landscaping, the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the landscape qualities of the area and as such there is no justification to set aside the policies which seek to safeguard the countryside for its own sake and therefore the proposal should be resisted.

For these reasons, it is considered that the development harms the character of the landscape, and conflicts with Policies N17 and N19 of the Local Plan, and with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Would there be any adverse impact on residential amenity?

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Space about Dwellings provides advice on environmental considerations such as light, privacy and outlook.

There are some residential properties to the south east of the site approximately 30 – 35 metres from the caravan site, however there are trees and vegetation that provides a good level of screening to ensure that the caravans would not lead to a material loss of amenity to these residential properties.

Is the proposal acceptable in terms of highway safety?

The development for up to 18 caravans to be stored or used as holiday accommodation at the site will lead to increased trips to the site. As it is for holiday accommodation, the trips to and from the site would be likely to be more frequent than if it was just for storage. These trips would be added to the existing trips generated by the permitted holiday park with winter storage at the front of the site.

The Highway Authority has no objections to the application and no conditions are recommended.

Overall, the application would have an acceptable impact on highway safety and the application should not be resisted on these grounds.

Do the adverse impacts of the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole?

Letters of support have been received stating that the caravan site supports the local economy and that it is a well used site.

The Planning Inspector took these issues into consideration on the previous application. The National Planning Policy Framework supports economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. The Framework states that local plans should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside, and promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

There is a permitted touring park and winter storage at Bar Hill Villa, and this application seeks retrospective permission to expand the use. However, the benefits to the local economy that arise from the caravans on the extension to the existing caravan site have not been quantified, and the arguments concerning support for local businesses could be applied to most new development in the countryside. Any benefits to the local economy would not outweigh the harm caused by the development to the open countryside.

#### Recommended enforcement action

As the proposal is considered to be harmful to the countryside, it is recommended that the application is refused, and as the use is already in operation it will be necessary to take appropriate enforcement action to seek the removal of these caravans from this part of the site which is harming the character of the countryside.

This would involve serving an enforcement notice to seek removal of the caravans from the new site within a specified time frame. 3 months is considered an acceptable length of time for the owners of the caravans to seek alternative storage solutions and remove them from the site.

In terms of the raised bunding, this would not need to be removed as part of the enforcement proceedings as this in itself is not harmful.

#### **Policies and proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision:-**

##### Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) 2006-2026

Policy ASP6:	Rural Area Spatial Policy
Policy CSP1:	Design Quality
Policy CSP3:	Sustainability and Climate Change
Policy CSP4:	Natural Assets

##### Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (NLP) 2011

Policy T16:	Development – General Parking Requirements
Policy N17:	Landscape Character: General Considerations
Policy N19:	Landscape Maintenance Areas

**Other Material Considerations include:**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014)

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Space Around Dwellings SPG (SAD) (July 2004)

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance SPD (2010)

Relevant Planning History

00/00616/FUL	Refused	Siting of residential caravan for security purposes (appeal dismissed)
01/00243/FUL	Refused	Engineering and earth moulding operations to form ornamental pool and associated landscaping
01/00881/FUL	Permitted	Engineering and earth moulding operations to form ornamental pool and associated landscaping
10/00227/FUL	Refused	Storage of domestic caravans (appeal dismissed)
11/00025/ELD	Refused	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for existing use as General storage, parking of haulage vehicles also plant and equipment together with maintenance, including agricultural equipment. The storage of timber and building materials
12/00333/ELD	Permitted	Use of site for general storage; parking of haulage vehicles with plant and equipment; maintenance of such vehicles and other vehicles and equipment such as earth moving vehicles, tractors and equipment. Storage of building equipment and materials. Laying of hardstanding and access roads

Views of Consultees

The **Environmental Health Division** comments that the proposal is to use the existing waste storage and disposal arrangements to service the proposed extension. Waste from an additional 18 caravans may result in the current arrangements leading to an impact on the surrounding area. Therefore request a condition requiring prior approval of waste storage and collection arrangements. The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 requires that caravan sites hold a licence issued by the local authority. There are a large number of exemptions from the requirement to hold such a licence and the applicant should satisfy himself that he qualifies for such an exemption or obtain a caravan site licence by calling the Housing Team on (01782) 717717.

This may have implications for the layout and facilities on site, including the provision of waste storage and refuse disposal

Also recommend external lighting is prohibited, and to seek prior approval of any external lighting. Recommend an informative regarding the importation of waste materials to facilitate construction

The **Landscape Development Section** has not got capacity to provide comments on the application

The **Highway Authority** has no objections

The **County Footpaths Officer** states that the proposal does not appear to directly affect the public footpaths.

**Madeley Parish Council** has no objections to the application providing that evergreen screening is adequate for neighbours and from the public footpath, including from lower down the hill. This should ensure that the white caravans will not dominate the landscape

### Representations

14 letters of representation have been received, in addition to 3 letters of support submitted with the application submission. These are summarised below:

- Ideal caravan site close to Stoke on Trent
- Clean and welcoming site
- Frequently spend weekends at the camp site
- Easily accessible site and plenty of space between the vans
- The caravan site supports the local area including the Wheatsheaf Public House, the farm shop, cricket and golf clubs
- The caravans are hardly noticeable to any cars driving past and not visible to many houses
- The site facilitates the enjoyment of the area and contributes to the local economy
- The development will bring extra trade to the local area and is putting Onneley/ Madeley area on the map
- The countryside is for everybody to enjoy
- It is a peaceful and well-kept site
- When staying at the site, visitors use the local facilities such as the pub, shops and restaurants

### Applicant's/Agent's submission

The documents is available for inspection at the Guildhall and searching under the application reference number 15/00638/FUL on the website page that can be accessed by following this link <http://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/>

### Background papers

Planning files referred to

Planning Documents referred to

### Date report prepared

29<sup>th</sup> September 2015