

Northrepps – PF/21/2263 - Siting of four glamping pods for holiday use at Shrublands Farm Camping Site, Craft Lane, Northrepps for Mr J Youngman

Minor Development

- Target Date: 14th October 2021

- Extension of time 23rd December 2021

Case Officer: Mrs L Starling

Full Planning Permission

CONSTRAINTS

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Landscape Character Area Type RV6 (River Valley)

EA Risk Surface Water Flooding 1 in 1000 –Risk of Flooding (0.1% annual chance):1 in 1000

County Wildlife Site – Templewood Estate

Advertising Control

Countryside

Agricultural Land Classification – Grade 3

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PF/92/0781 – Siting of 5 self-contained holiday lodges (Land Part of Shrublands Farm, Church Street Northrepps) – Refused and Appeal Dismissed.

History relating to field to the north-west

PF/09/0346 – Retention of concrete base and portable toilet block – Approved.

THE APPLICATION

Seeks full planning permission for the siting of 4 no. self-contained curved timber glamping pods to be constructed on a rectangular parcel of land at Shrublands Farm to the south of Northrepps village. The glamping pods would be arranged informally with each pod providing self-contained holiday accommodation including bedroom, bathroom and kitchen facilities, and measuring approximately 3.3 metres in width, 7.2m in length, with a maximum height of 2.8 metres. On-site parking would be provided to the front of each pod, along with an area of decking proposed to the north of each pod, with indicative details provided.

The application site is currently used as a ‘Certified’ Caravanning and Camping Site to the east of Craft Lane. To the north-west of the site lies a parcel of grassed land within the Applicants ownership. During the Officers site visit it was noted that this land appeared to be being used by caravans/tents as part of the certified site, with a row of residential dwellings beyond. Fields lie to the north and east, with Shrublands Farm site to the south and a pair of dwellings beyond.

Access to the glamping pods would be via an existing forked vehicular access off Craft Lane, currently used to serve the Certified site.

A small single-storey toilet block lies to the north of the site (Ref: PF/09/0346) which was approved in 2009 to serve the certified site.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

At the request of Councillor Fitch-Tillett who confirmed support for the application for the following reasons.

The site is completely screened in the landscape and therefore has no impact on the AONB. This is replacement for touring caravans and tents in a historical site (at least 30 years) therefore there will be no towed caravans along the narrow, one vehicle width lanes into the village.

This will improve the tourism offer in North Norfolk It is a vital diversification of farmland to ensure the financial viability of the Farming Company.

PARISH COUNCIL

Northrepps Parish Council – No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

CONSULTATIONS

NNDC Landscape Officer – Objection and refusal of the application recommended for the following reasons;

The Landscape Section have significant reservations regarding the proposal to site four glamping pods for holiday use on the exemption camp site at Shrublands Farm and the resultant impact this would have on the AONB and local landscape character.

The site is located off Craft Lane, a small, narrow rural lane that connects Northrepps to Southrepps, via Frogshall, and is wholly within the Norfolk Coast AONB. The road is typical of the quiet rural lanes that occur in this part of the District and is itself part of a Sustrans Cycle route. The site is located within the River Valleys Landscape Character Type (North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment, LCA, January 2021), specifically within Mundesley Beck (RV6), and is characteristic of the valued features and qualities of the landscape type. For example, small field sizes that provide an intimacy and a strong sense of place on the valley floor, woodland edge and sense of rurality and historical continuity.

The increase in domestic tourism and the demand for new facilities and infrastructure (including camping and glamping sites) is seen as a key force for change for the landscape type, which can increase traffic levels, recreation pressure and light pollution which detract from the prevailing landscape character. Although the site currently operates as an exempted site for the Camping and Caravanning Club, which permits up to 5 caravans and up to 10 motor caravans (motorhomes/campervans) or 10 tents, this use is partially screened by the topography of the site and the woodland to the east (assuming the exempted use is restricted to the field within the red line). The proposal would add to the traffic on the rural lane, introduce more permanent structures into the field and the use would result in impacts on tranquillity and dark skies.

The Planning Statement (section 5.10) states that the “site already has a licence for 15 pitch units on the site, a copy of which is included as an appendix”. However, the Planning Statement is not specific enough as to what ‘site’ it is referring to, i.e. whether this site refers to the field within the red line or the field to the north (outside of the red line but highlighted on the Location and Block Plans as Shrublands Farm Caravan Site), or whether the site encompasses both fields. The Landscape Section consider this is pertinent to the application as it is noted that at the time of the granting of the Camping and Caravanning Club exemption licence (1982) the field to the north of the red line site marked as Shrublands Farm Caravan Site was still in use as an agricultural field and does not appear to have been brought into use as a ‘camping site’ until the late 2000’s, and does not appear to have received permission for a change of use or benefit from the exemption licence. Therefore, if the field subject of this application and that benefiting from the exemption licence to operate as a camp site for up to 15 units, is reduced in size by the placement of four glamping pods, this will result in the remaining units permitted by the exemption licence being forced onto the northern field (which does not appear to benefit from permission) and which would add to the impact of the camp site and proposed glamping pods on the valued features of the AONB. It would appear that the farm has already diversified significantly into the tourism

accommodation market and already provides bed and breakfast, glamping and camping accommodation on multiple locations within its land holding (whether this benefits from planning approval is unknown).

The Landscape Section are concerned that the addition of a further four glamping pods would further add to the pressure and impact on this part of the AONB, eroding key features such as tranquillity and dark skies. The Landscape Section therefore consider that the development proposals would be contrary to Policies EN1 and EN2 of the Core Strategy as it would not protect or conserve the valued features of the AONB or Landscape Character.

Furthermore, the planning application is effectively seeking permission for a new camping site in the AONB which is contrary to Policy EC10.

County Council Highways – No objections.

Comments that the route to and from this site is via narrow single-track roads and as such the location is not ideal for a camp site especially where large vehicle access and egress is involved.

However, given this is an existing camping site and it would appear this proposal replaces existing pitches available for touring caravans/motorhomes with camping accommodation expected to involve car borne traffic only, no grounds for objection are raised.

Conditions in respect of access improvements and visibility are requested in the event of approval, along with an informative note relating to highway works.

Further comments have been sought from NCC Highways following receipt of the revised Planning Statement confirming the Certified nature of the site as this may have implications for the highway response provided. Members will be update verbally on receipt of any further response from NCC Highways.

Norfolk Coast Partnership – Confirmed they neither object or support the application. Comments as follows;

I note there are two existing pods and huts. We have some concern over the growth of the site, the pods will be more of a permanent feature in the landscape although there will be some screening due to the envelope of mature trees around the proposed area. There will be added cars on site as well as potential light pollution if not mitigated and movement creating visual disturbance.

EC 10 states ' Extension of, or intensification of, existing static caravan sites (including replacement with woodland lodges) and touring caravan / camping sites will only be permitted where the proposal: conclusively demonstrates a very high standard of design and landscaping and minimal adverse impact on its surroundings; is appropriate when considered against the other policies of the plan'.

I don't feel I can fully support the proposal as it will not 'conserve and enhance' the AONB in line with NPPF para 176 and there are questions around EC3 and EC7 and being fully compliant. However, it is difficult to object given the precedent of other development on the site. The buildings are relatively modest and screened therefore so long as there is no added infrastructure on site or sub-urbanisation of the area with artificial boundary treatments etc then the impact can be lessened. We would also ask that no external lighting is included to safeguard our dark skies, a special feature of the AONB.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the proposed development may raise issues relevant to

Article 8: The Right to respect for private and family life.

Article 1 of the First Protocol: The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

Having considered the likely impact on an individual's Human Rights, and the general interest of the public, refusal of this application as recommended is considered to be justified, proportionate and in accordance with planning law.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 - SECTION 17

The application raises no significant crime and disorder issues.

POLICIES

North Norfolk Core Strategy (Adopted September 2008):

SS 1 - Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk

SS 2 - Development in the Countryside

SS 4 – Environment

SS 5 – Economy

SS 6 – Access and infrastructure

EN 1 – Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and The Broads

EN 2 - Protection and enhancement of landscape and settlement character

EN 4 - Design

EN 9 - Biodiversity and geology

EN 13 – Pollution and hazard prevention and minimisation

EC 1 - Farm Diversification

EC 3 – Extensions to existing businesses in the Countryside

EC 7 – Location of New Tourism Development

EC 10 – Static and Touring Caravan and Camping Sites

CT 5 - The transport impact of new development

CT 6 - Parking provision

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Section 2: Achieving sustainable development

Section 4: Decision-making

Section 12: Achieving well-designed places

Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (SPD) January 2021

North Norfolk Design Guide (SPD) Adopted 2008

MAIN ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Principle and site history
2. Design and landscape impacts including upon the AONB
3. Residential amenity
4. Highway safety

APPRAISAL

1. Principle and site history (Policies SS 1, SS 2, SS 5, EC 1, EC 7 and EC 10)

This application seeks to construct 4 no. glamping pods on a parcel of land belonging to Shrublands Farm in Northrepps.

The application site lies within a rural location on the periphery of the village, on land designated as 'Countryside' under Policy SS 1 and SS 2 of the North Norfolk Core Strategy. Policy SS2 of the North Core Strategy limits the types of development to those requiring a rural location, with the principle of 'recreation and tourism development (such as that being proposed) supported, subject to compliance with other local and national planning policies.

Polices EC 7 and EC 10 deal specifically with controlling the location of new tourism development, with EC 7 requiring a sequential approach to its location, with specific reference made to stating that new build unserviced holiday accommodation in the Countryside should be treated as permanent residential dwellings and should not be

permitted. Policy EC 10 further states that new static caravan sites and woodland holiday accommodation (which would also cover glamping pods) will only be permitted in limited circumstances, and not where they are located within sensitive landscape designations such as the Norfolk Coast AONB, with extensions to existing sites being tightly controlled where they demonstrate a high standard of design and have minimal adverse impacts upon their surroundings.

In this case, the site, while used as a caravan/camping site does not benefit from planning permission, but instead has operated for many years as a Certified Camping site, over which the Council has no control subject to it operating within the parameters of the exemption licence. The site also lies within the Norfolk Coast AONB where Policy EN 1 of the Core Strategy recognises the impact of individual proposals and their cumulative impact on the designated AONB and its setting, stating that proposals which would be significantly detrimental to the special qualities of the AONB and their setting should not be permitted.

Therefore, given the sites certified status, Officers would conclude that the scheme should be assessed as a new camping site under Policy EC 10, as opposed to a scheme for the extension or intensification of an existing site, with its location within the Norfolk Coast AONB, therefore resulting in the scheme being contrary to the requirements of Policy EC 10. This view is also reflected in the Landscape Officers objection to the principle of such as a development being permitted in this location. The self-contained nature of the holiday accommodation being proposed would also result in the creation of new build unserviced holiday accommodation in the Countryside, which would also be contrary to Policy EC 7. Members attention is drawn to the planning history section which refers to a similar proposal for the siting of 5 no. self-contained holiday lodges to be sited on this land (Ref: PF/92/1086). Whilst some years ago and thus determined under different policies, the application was refused and dismissed at Appeal on the grounds of principle, detrimental impacts upon the AONB/landscape and highway safety.

Reference has been made within the Planning Statement to the development helping to support the existing rural business (which comprises of a mixture of agriculture and tourism) and the economic benefits which would accrue from it. However, no detailed farm diversification case has been presented, with elements of the existing business such as the existing pods on a different site also not appearing to benefit from planning permission. In any case, such economic benefits would need to be balanced against the significant harm which would result from new tourist accommodation being permitted within this sensitive landscape designation.

2. Design and landscape impacts including upon the Norfolk Coast AONB (Policies EC 10, EN 1, EN 2, EN 4 and EN 9 and Sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF)

Whilst a site layout was provided in support of the application, along with visualisations of the external appearance of the proposed glamping pods and clarification of their self-contained nature, no proposed elevation drawings or floor plans have been submitted. Whilst details such as external appearance and materials could be conditioned in the event of approval, from a purely design perspective, it is considered that the proposed glamping pods and decking areas would be likely to be acceptable in design terms in terms of compliance with Policy EN 4 and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Notwithstanding this, due to their location within the designated AONB, members will note the Landscape Officers strong objection to the scheme as proposed, along with the concerns raised by the Norfolk Coast Partnership in respect of compliance with Policy EC 10 and the resulting impacts of the addition of a further four glamping pods would further add to the pressure and impact on this part of the AONB, eroding key features such as tranquillity and dark skies and the resultant impacts this would have on the AONB and local landscape

character.

Whilst the accompanying Planning Statement makes reference to the proposals replacing 4 of the existing pitches and it has been confirmed by the Agent that the site does not benefit from planning permission, with the field to the north not forming part of the Certified site (notwithstanding this the land within the red line and adjacent field to the north appeared to be being used as a part of the certified site at the time of the Officers visit). This is an important factor given that the proposed glamping pods on the application site may in fact merely result in the displacement of pitches onto the adjacent field, resulting in a more intensive development in terms of pitches, particularly as the siting of the pods on the certified site (shown in red) would make it difficult for the remaining pitches to be accommodated on this site in a satisfactory manner.

The Agent has also confirmed that it is not the Applicants intention to move the pods from the site (doing so may prove difficult in any case) and as such they would constitute permanent structures which could be occupied throughout the year. The certified site by contrast is temporary in nature, with the tents and caravans only on site for part of the year.

It is therefore considered that the development proposals as proposed would be contrary to Policies EC 10, EN1 and EN2 of the Core Strategy as they would fail to protect or conserve the valued features of the Norfolk Coast AONB or Landscape Character.

3. Residential amenity (Policies EN 4 and EN 13)

Policy EN 4 supports development proposals where they would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the residential amenity of nearby occupiers.

It is noted that existing residential properties lie to the north-west and south of the site. Notwithstanding this, given the degree of separation from this proposed site, the presence to the existing established vegetation and the fact that the application site is already largely used for tourism purposes (albeit for a lesser period due to the certification limitations), it is not considered that the proposals would result in any significantly detrimental impacts upon the residential amenities of the occupants of the existing properties in respect of privacy, light or disturbance. Lighting could be controlled through the imposition of conditions.

As such, it is considered that subject to the proposed conditions, the proposed development would comply with the requirements of Policies EN 4 and EN 13 of the adopted North Norfolk Core Strategy in respect of protecting residential amenity.

4. Highway safety (Policies CT5 and CT6)

Access to the site would be via an existing unmade access off Craft Lane which currently serves the Certified Camping site. Whilst it is noted that NCC Highways have raised concerns regarding the suitability of the surrounding road network (due to it being accessed by narrow single-track roads) to cater for the proposed development, they have concluded that given this is an existing camping site and would appear to be replacing existing pitches available for touring caravans/motorhomes with camping accommodation expected to involve car borne traffic only, no formal highway objection has been raised subject to conditions.

Further views have been sought from NCC Highways following the revisions to the Planning Statement recognising the status of the site as Certified as opposed to being granted under a planning permission to ascertain whether their view remains as stated. Members will be updated verbally at the meeting.

Based on confirmation from Highways that their view remains unchanged, it is considered that the scheme would, subject to conditions, safeguard highway safety in accordance with the requirements of Policies CT5 and CT6 of the Core Strategy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that the principle of new tourist accommodation in this location,

due to its siting with the sensitive AONB designated resulting in conflict with Policy EC 10, its self-contained nature in the 'Countryside' conflicting with Policy EC 7 and the resulting landscape harm due to the introduction of a more intensive use of the site, would if carried out, result in an unacceptable level of harm to the Norfolk Coast AONB and wider landscape character. As such, the proposals would fail to comply with relevant Development Plan policies and the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSAL for the following reasons:

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority:

- The scheme would result in introduction of new build tourist accommodation on land designated as 'Countryside' in Policies SS 1 and SS 2 of the Core Strategy, where Policy EC 10 specifically prohibits the principle of new holiday sites within sensitive landscape designations including the Norfolk Coast AONB.
- A development of 4 no. glamping pods in this location would constitute an unacceptable form development within the Norfolk Coast AONB, contrary to the requirements of Policies EN 1, EN 2 and EN 4 of the North Norfolk Core Strategy, Section 15 of the NPPF and the principles set out in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment, 2018 (NNLCA) and the North Norfolk Design Guide (SPD).

Final wording of reasons for refusal to be delegated to the Assistant Director for Planning.