

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

4th August 2004

S/1217/04/F - Waterbeach

**Redevelopment of Existing Caravan Park to Comprise 39 Touring Pitches,
New Toilet/Shower/Laundry Block, Reception Building and Internal
Road. Extension to Season to 11 Months from 6th February to 5th January.
“Travellers Rest” Caravan Park, Chittering for C. Crickmore**

Recommendation – Delegated Approval

Site and Proposal

1. Grass field of 0.9ha area to the north of the “Travellers Rest” public house/restaurant on the eastern side of Ely Road/A10, on the corner of School Lane. To the north is a house, to the rear of which is a small commercial brewery, to the east farmland and the garden of a house in School Lane.
2. Entrance to the site onto School Lane is between a childrens play area and the rear of the public house/restaurant. Opposite are houses on School Lane.
3. The full application, received 10th June, proposes the construction of a loop road within the site, off which would be 38/39 caravan pitches, a toilet, shower, laundry block and a Reception building. Water points, fire points and bin storage areas would be provided through the site.

Policy

4. Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan seeks to restrict development “in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location”.
5. Policy P4/1 of the Structure Plan supports improved tourism facilities which, inter alia, increases employment facilities and improves the landscape.
6. Policy RT1 of the Local Plan highlights the fact that the Authority will resist proposals for recreation and tourist facilities if materials, structures and buildings are intrusive, there will be a loss of archaeological interests and there is inadequate landscaping.

History

7. In March 1974 (application ref C/73/1446) consent was granted to use the field for a touring caravan and camping site (40 pitches), plus toilets and shower block.
8. Condition 2 restricted use of the site for the summer months only – 1st April to 30th September in any one year. The reason for the condition was “to safeguard the interests of other users of land in the vicinity”.
9. In May 1986, (application ref. S/0294/86) consent to extend the above to cover the winter months was refused for the reason:-

“The use of this land for touring caravans during the winter months in an area where adequate facilities already exist would be visually detrimental to the open and rural appearance and character of the area”.

Consultations

10. **Waterbeach** Parish Council recommends approval and asks that no caravan should stay on site for more than 21 days and that there be no caravans on site during the “closed season”.
11. Following a recent meeting with a representative of the Local Highway Authority and the Area Officer, the Parish Council may comment further with regard to highway issues.
12. Any comments from **Landbeach** Parish Council will be reported verbally.
13. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** is of the opinion that additional water supplies for fire fighting are not required.
14. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** asks that a limitation on machinery hours during the period of construction be imposed on any approval.
15. The comments of the **Local Highway Authority** will be reported verbally but improvements to the access and widening of School Lane are expected.
16. The **Waterbeach Level Internal Drainage Board** does not object to the scheme in principle if adequate soakaways are provided. If other method(s) of surface water drainage are proposed the Board must be re-consulted.
17. The comments of the **Environment Agency** will be reported verbally.
18. The **County Archaeologist** recommends a site investigation be required by condition (see further comments below).

Representations - Applicant

19. A letter of 6th May from Humberts Leisure, agent for the applicant, is attached as an Appendix and outlines their client’s proposals and, more importantly, the change in the “holiday caravan industry” in the last 40 years.

Representations – Neighbours

20. Thirteen letters of objection have been received from residents, - points raised being:-
 - i) the scheme will double the size of the village which has no facilities – shop, Post Office, etc. What facilities will be provided by the Council if consent is granted?
 - ii) with such an increase, children will have to go to school which will put pressure on the school and school transport.
 - iii) Chittering is not a “highly desirable” tourist area. Not being popular the site will become permanent.

- iv) a six month summer season is adequate, there is no evidence of need to extend it to eleven months. If required over the Xmas/New Year period, then a special licence could be given for that period.
- v) if an eleven month period is agreed, the site will become a permanent mobile home park.
- vi) there should be a condition limiting the number of people on site to 50 at any one time.
- vii) conditions should be attached to any consent stating touring caravans only, one caravan/one family per pitch, 21 day stay maximum and no return within 14 days.
- viii) the extended period will increase noise and disturbance to neighbours.
- ix) if the extended period is agreed, then perhaps a temporary consent should be granted in order to judge its impact.
- x) no objections to a renewal of current licence for 40, - or even a slight increase, but keep to a 4 month period.
- xi) layout too dense.
- xii) scheme should be re-designed to have the road on the periphery of the site which would have some of the vans further away from adjacent residential boundaries. Extra screening is needed for privacy and, adjacent to the Brewery, the fence should be increased to 2.6m.
- xiii) there is noise from the adjacent Brewery, more at certain times of the year. The premises also has a reed bed for drainage which could be a danger.
- xiv) with a ditch along School Lane being filled in, the road occasionally floods.
- xv) the proposed shower block should be where it is at present and the Reception Block is new.
- xvi) the policy for Chittering is "no further development". If these buildings are allowed, plus the 8 bed guest rooms, their combined floor area amounts to two bungalows. New buildings are not allowed in the village.
- xvii) School Lane is single track and heavily trafficked already with school transport, and residential and agricultural traffic.
- xviii) extending the period from six months to eleven months will represent a huge increase in the amount of traffic.
- ixx) since consent was granted in 1974 there have been increases in the volume of traffic on the Ely Road/A10, - especially commuter traffic and lorries connected with the Waste Management Park.
- xx) the School Lane/Ely Road junction should be improved to cater for this extra traffic.
- xxi) the access is next to the children's play area.

xxii) the bin lorry, when parked on School Lane collecting from the public house, can be a hazard.

xxiii) the site could be developed for travellers. A local farmer took a field off the market after travellers showed an interest in buying it.

Planning Comments

21. The main issues to be considered in respect of this proposal are:

- Scale of development
- Extension to season
- Layout of site and proposed buildings
- Traffic and access
- Archaeology
- Conditions
- Other uses

i) Scale of Development

22. The site has planning consent for caravans/camping for a total of 40 pitches. Such could be implemented tomorrow with no further consents from the Council. The submitted layout plan proposes 38 caravan pitches

23. This application is for the actual “engineering and buildings works” ie roadway and hard-standings, together with the two buildings. As can be seen from the Agents letter, see Appendix, the standards expected by caravan site users has changed since consent was granted in the mid 1970’s. Then, users were happy to park on the grass with basic amenities, but today their requirements are much different. Although most caravans have limited bathroom/toilet facilities, there is still the need for a proper shower/laundry block. Likewise there has to be somewhere to “book in”, ie hence the need for a Reception building.

24. The shower block will be 4.1m high, the Reception building 3.8m. Buildings would be stained boarding with a slate or pantiled roofs and the site would be extensively landscaped.

25. In order to maintain the character of the site it is essential that all roads and hard-standings are constructed of sympathetic materials and at existing ground levels. The applicant has suggested the roadway to be tar-spray with a pea-shingle finish (similar to the new SCDC office car park), with timber edging, - not concrete kerbs. Individual hard-standings would again be a low key, natural materials.

ii) Extension to Season

26. Again, I would refer Members to the attached Appendix for the changes since consent was first granted.

27. It is not clear from the original file in 1973 whether the then applicant requested a six month period or whether it was imposed by the previous Authority. Either way the reason for the condition, “to safeguard the interests of other users of land in the vicinity”, does little to explain why it was for six months only.

28. In 1986 consent to allow “all year” caravan/camping on site was refused consent for two reasons, adequate facilities in the area and detrimental to the character of the area.

29. The large caravan/camping site at Landbeach Marina (now the Cambridge Research Park) has long been closed so the question of adequate need is no longer an issue. With proper screening/landscaping, there should be no loss of amenity to the area. There will, no doubt, be occasions during the six months of the summer, when there are not 39 or 38 caravans on site and this will certainly be the case in the extra five months requested.
30. If the site is satisfactory for the summer months and does not cause problems, what reason is there for not extending that period? I can appreciate the residents concerns about the site developing into a permanent mobile home park but that is not the proposal before the Authority.

iii) Layout of Site/Buildings

31. A simple, loop, road is the obvious way of laying out the site and a central toilet block is convenient to all. If, as suggested by a neighbour, the roadway is put adjacent the outside edge of the field, he would in my opinion, suffer more noise and disturbance from the road than from the caravan parked on the nearest plot.
32. The two buildings, as described earlier, are in scale with the site. The shower/toilet block includes both Male/Female toilets/washrooms, together with three showers each. There is also a disabled toilet and shower room. In addition, there are laundry and waste disposal facilities and a boiler room. The Reception Room is a front desk, office and toilet.

iv) Traffic and Access

33. These two issues are of great concern to the community and are also likely to be subject to further comment from Waterbeach Parish Council.
34. However it must be stressed that the site already has consent for 40 caravan/camping pitches so, in theory, there will be no increase in traffic. Following a meeting on site with the applicant, the Parish Council, the Area Planning Officer and a representative of the Local Highway Authority, I understand that the latter is likely to ask that the existing access off School Lane be widened and provided with proper kerb radii, and that School Lane be widened up to its junction with Ely Road. The access to the car park from Ely Road should be closed.

A verbal report will be made in respect of these matters.

35. With the site already having consent for camping/caravans, and with the closure of the public house/restaurant access to Ely Road which will have benefits for all, it is unlikely that the County Council could insist on the applicant funding improvements to the School Lane junction, ie a proper "ghost island".

v) Archaeology

36. In his request for a safeguarding condition, the County Archaeologist states:
- "The proposed development site is situated alongside the A10, a major Roman routeway, in an area which has previously produced a number of Roman burials and contains extensive evidence for Roman settlement. Sites in the vicinity include the earthworks of a Roman farmstead/settlement on Chittering Hill, some 150m to the north, which is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM 13605), a series of cropmarks indicating further settlement and associated field systems to the west and

a series of artefact scatters of Roman and Saxon date. In addition, the presence of a ring ditch (possibly the plough-levelled remains of a burial mound) suggests a much earlier element to the settlement and exploitation of the landscape in this area.”

37. Policy P7/6 of the Structure Plan and EN15 of the Local Plan stress the importance of early investigation of development sites prior to any approved works commencing.

vi Conditions

38. In addition to the standard conditions concerning materials for the buildings, hard landscaping, soft landscaping and drainage, it is essential to ensure that the site is only used for touring caravans and that the site is clear of all vans for one month of the year. Whilst a “21 day only” condition sounds a simple solution to the problem, officers are investigating this matter and checking Case Law. Also, it must be remembered that the existing consent has no such conditions.

A verbal up-date will be made in this respect.

vii Other Uses

39. When the applicant first purchased the property and moved onto the site, the community was fearful that the site was to be used for other forms of caravans/mobile homes. That is not the applicant’s intention but I can appreciate the local concern. The application, as with any other, has to be determined on the scheme submitted, not on what may, or may not, happen in the future.

Recommendation

40. That delegated approval be granted subject to revised plans showing the full access improvements being submitted and agreed and that suitable conditions be agreed, as summarised above.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

County Structure Plan 2003
South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
Planning Application File S/1217/04/F

Contact Officer: Jem Belcham, Area Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713252