

Mr and Mrs N Pickett

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Consultancy

Design and Access Statement
Extension to Touring Caravan Site and Change of use
and Extension of Agricultural Barn to Form
Reception/Storage of Maintenance Equipment and
Café, and Ancillary Welfare Facilities
The Lawns and Lakes Camping and Caravan Site,
Lowgate Grange, Lowgate, Fleet Hargate, Spalding,
Lincolnshire, PE12 8LN

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town planning



landscape architecture



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Design and Access Statement accompanies a Full Planning Application to extend the existing caravan site on land used for caravan rallies by exempted organisations and the change of use and extension of an existing agricultural building to a combined reception/café and storage building.
- 1.2. The application site lies wholly within the existing landscaped grounds of the existing caravan site.
- 1.3. Lawns and Lakes Camping and Caravan Site was first established in 2009 when the site was used for caravan rallies by exempted organisations and has gone on to become established as one of the district's best tourist accommodation sites. The business is also registered with the British Holiday and Home Parks Association.
- 1.4. Planning Permission (H05-0651-11) was first granted in November 2011 for the touring caravan site, fishing lake, amenity building and wildlife areas. This was subsequently amended by two permissions H05-0450-12, which revised the drawings, and H05-0843-12, to allow touring caravans on site during the October and Easter school holidays.
- 1.5. The building that was approved as part of the original consent was never constructed and instead an existing agricultural building has instead been converted into a reception and café with a function area that caters for the visitors to the site.
- 1.6. There is a strong biodiversity theme to the site and the applicants have planted a plethora of different tree and shrub species that have matured to create a wonderful environment for both visitors and wildlife alike.
- 1.7. Mr and Mrs Pickett are fervent supporters and promoters of tourism in South Holland and often attend events beyond the district and county, where they actively promote the area as a destination.
- 1.8. In support of the application, a Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared which concludes that the site is safe from flooding.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1. The application site extends to some 2.1 hectares and is located in open countryside to the north of the A17 trunk road and accessed via Lowgate, which leads directly off the A17. The application site forms part of the existing camping and caravanning complex.
- 2.2. To the immediate north-east of the site is the applicants' home, Lowgate Grange, which has a small fishing lake to the rear. The application site is generally flat and laid to grass with internal gravel roadways and with a significant amount of landscaping (some 15,000 trees and hedge plants), both within the site and to the boundaries together with a large fishing lake that was constructed as part of the original consent. The applicants have also enrolled in the David Bellamy Conservation Award Scheme which looks to recognise those organisations that have contributed significantly towards furthering biodiversity.
- 2.3. The applicants' dwelling provides the necessary supervision of the site.
- 2.4. There is an existing agricultural building on the site used as a reception/café and for storing grounds maintenance equipment. It is this use that is proposed to be legitimised and the building extended as part of this application, along with the siting of ancillary amenity buildings which have been constructed to a very high standard.
- 2.5. The village of Fleet Hargate is located due south on the southern side of the A17.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The principle behind this proposal is to extend and enhance the existing low density, quality touring caravan site with an emphasis on fishing and wildlife.
- 3.2. A total of 56 caravan pitches will be provided in addition to the existing 30 approved on site. The additional pitches are located within a well landscaped area used for caravan rallies.
- 3.3. To support the proposed use, new shower and toilet facilities have been installed together with chemical disposal points. The disposal points are periodically emptied by an approved contractor.
- 3.4. The former agricultural building is now used as a main reception and has a small café, function area for visitors and also for the storage of grounds maintenance equipment. The café has a 5 star food safety rating from South Holland District Council. The café prepares breakfasts which prove extremely popular, especially for visitors who are leaving as it avoids having to wash up on the day of their departure! Sunday lunches also prove popular and special events are also laid on for visitors. The site has a coded lock on the gate and all the on-site amenities and the café are for the visitors to the site only.
- 3.5. Overall, the site is divided up into discrete areas, which now benefit from mature landscaping. The site is no longer visible from beyond the site boundaries.
- 3.6. External lighting is used solely to mark the way around the site and this takes the form of low-energy bollard-type lights. These lights are typically 1.2m high and throw light down towards the ground and have a compact field of luminance to avoid light pollution.
- 3.7. The application is largely retrospective with the business having operated in its current arrangement for many years. The only element not to have been constructed is the proposed extension to the existing reception/café.

4. PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1. The Development Plan in relation to the proposal comprises the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan adopted in 2019.
- 4.2. Policy 1 – Spatial Strategy, sets out that in relation to development in the countryside, proposals will be permitted that are necessary to such a location and/or where it can be demonstrated that it meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits.
- 4.3. Policy 9 – Promoting a Stronger Visitor Economy, states that in the countryside, small-scale development to support the visitor economy, will be supported provided that proposals: 1. do not conflict with neighbouring land uses; 2. are in keeping with the character of the locality; and 3. demonstrate a functional link with an existing rural attraction or farm enterprise.
- 4.4. The proposal essentially results in a change of the use of the land from one which caters for rallies by exempted organisations (which does not need planning permission or a Caravan Site Licence), to one for anyone with a caravan or motorhome, but importantly, one with amenity provision in the form of a well-designed shower and toilet block, and chemical disposal points and refuse collection. The site has been used in the manner now being applied for, for many years.
- 4.5. The applicants have also identified a need for pitches to accommodate families with members who suffer from autism. Three 'tranquil pitches' have been established away from the main activity on site to allow for a more peaceful stay.
- 4.6. The success of the site has allowed the applicants to establish a licence with the 'Call Connect' bus service, which now collects passengers from the site. The service is very well patronised and has resulted in a modal shift away from the use of the private car, once visitors are on site. The 505 service also operates from the centre of Fleet Hargate. These two services allow visitors to access Baytree Nursery in Weston, Springfields Shopping Outlet in Spalding and the weekly market in the centre of Long Sutton. Within walking distance from the site are: the Chestnuts Tea Room, the Beijing Palace Restaurant, the Rose and Crown Public House in the village and the Anglia Farm Shop for fruit and veg.

- 4.7. The applicants encourage all visitors to walk, cycle and use the Call Connect service and car share when staying at the site.
- 4.8. There are food deliveries to the site from Tesco in Holbeach and the applicants take orders from visitors to the site and arrange for fish and chips to be collected from Henry's Fish and Chip Shop in Long Sutton. The café on site is stocked with day-to-day essentials provided by local businesses and the café uses local produce from the likes of South Lincs Foods, Shearer's Butchers in Holbeach and Othello's Bakery in Long Sutton. Visitors also use Cecil Coates in Whaplode and Jed's Tackle in Holbeach for angling supplies.
- 4.9. The day-to day running of the site relies on the use of a significant number of local businesses. The principal local businesses that are used regularly are I Brown Electrical for testing installations, Simon Sleight for plumbing, J S Kirkham for foul waste disposal and KD Contracting for pest control.
- 4.10. In general, the site has a significant and positive impact on the economy of the local area.
- 4.11. In 2019 a report entitled 'Pitching the Value' was published under the banner of the umbrella organisation The UK Camping and Caravan Alliance on the economic value of holiday parks to the national UK economy, and to each of the nations of Britain. There are now independently audited figures which demonstrate the huge contribution of the industry and the jobs that are sustained. The industry contributes a massive 8% of the UK's entire tourism Gross Value Added (GVA), generating around £9.3 billion of visitor spending annually and supporting more than 170,000 jobs.
- 4.12. The report has been published under the umbrella of the UK Caravan & Camping Alliance, which brings together British Holiday and Home Parks Association with The Camping and Caravanning Club, the Caravan and Motorhome Club, and the National Caravan Council. A dedicated website has been established at <https://www.ukcca.org.uk/> where the report findings can be viewed.
- 4.13. The reports are available to download on the links below:

[Summary – Pitching the Value](#)

[Holiday Park Economic Impact – UK final report](#)

[Holiday Park Economic Impact – ENGLAND final report](#)

- 4.14. The revenue generated by tourism can help to:
- a. Support and enhance local services and facilities such as shops and pubs, particularly in rural areas;
 - b. Secure the retention or upgrading of public services such as public transport, health centres and libraries;
 - c. Support a broader and more vibrant and active community by attracting arts, sports or cultural events;
 - d. Aid diversification within the rural economy; and
 - e. Underpin the quality of the local environment and facilitate further enjoyment of it by residents and visitors.
- 4.15. Regrettably from the applicants' perspective, the promotion of tourism by South Holland District Council seems to be overshadowed by the efforts of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, which has invited the applicants to participate in the Wash Partnership and the Norfolk Astronomy Association have accredited the application site as part of the 'Dark Skies' initiative.
- 4.16. In conclusion, the proposal results in a sustainable extension to the business in accordance with Local Plan policies 1 and 9 in that the location and operation of the site offers a demonstrable modal shift away from the use of the private car, the business helps to support local businesses, the general economy of the area and promotes the tourism offer for the district.
- 4.17. Local Plan Policy 2 – Development Management, sets out the general considerations for new development. Criterion 1 requires that "...sustainable development considerations are met, specifically in relation to: 1. size, scale, layout, density and impact on the amenity, trees, character and appearance of the area and the relationship to existing development and land uses; 2. quality of design and orientation; 3. maximising the use of sustainable materials and resources; 4. access and vehicle generation levels; 5. the capacity of existing community services and infrastructure; 6. impact upon neighbouring land uses by

reason of noise, odour, disturbance or visual intrusion; 7. sustainable drainage and flood risk; 8. impact or enhancement for areas of natural habitats and historical buildings and heritage assets; and 9. impact on the potential loss of sand and gravel mineral resources.

- 4.18. In relation to criterion 1, the 'extension' to the site is wholly contained within the existing complex which is consistent with the remainder of the site and the character of the area. There are no incidences of detrimental impact on the amenity of the area through the operation of the site and the applicants are able to maintain control by virtue of living in the dwelling on site.
- 4.19. In relation to criterion 2, the extension to the existing building is consistent in terms of design and scale to agricultural buildings and will be clad in green metal profile sheeting to match the existing.
- 4.20. The use of sustainable materials and resources as set out in criterion 3 is of limited relevance, having regard to the lack of built development, however, the café has seen the reuse of an existing building rather than a new one being constructed and the informal roadways around the site utilise road planings rather than new, primary aggregate.
- 4.21. The access to the site will remain unchanged and visitors must first negotiate a secure coded gate to gain entrance to the site. The gate is set back from the road to allow for a car and caravan to pull clear of the adopted highway. The use of the site creates a modest trickle of vehicular movements and in particular, the applicants encourage those leaving the site to turn left at the junction with the A17 (east) and then use the roundabout at Gedney to enable a quicker right turn on to the A17 when travelling west at times when the road is particularly busy.
- 4.22. The site has operated quite satisfactorily for many years without any detrimental impact on the local highway network. The concerted efforts made by the applicants' to encourage visitors to walk, cycle, car share and use the local bus service, has resulted in a modal shift away from the use of the private car during visitor stays on site and the proposal therefore complies with criterion 4.
- 4.23. The proposal supports existing local community services and infrastructure directly through the use of the bus service and through support for local businesses in accordance with criterion 5. The site is run by the applicants who reside on site and contact is direct with them

- 24/7. As local residents, they are regularly in touch with the other residents along this part of Lowgate and, in the event that there are any issues arising from the use of the site, these can be quickly dealt with.
- 4.24. The day to day running of the site does not, to our knowledge, result in any detrimental impact locally and, therefore, the proposal accords with criterion 6.
- 4.25. A Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out and this finds that the site is safe from flooding subject to the standard seasonal use condition for the occupation of the site. Surface water drains directly to the land which assists in maintaining the water levels in the pond and lake on site. The proposal therefore accords with criterion 7.
- 4.26. In terms of heritage assets, there are none nearby that would be impacted upon by this low-density proposal and, in terms of natural habitats, the applicants continue to manage the overall biodiversity of the site which has been improved massively following the development of the site 10 years ago. The proposal therefore complies with criterion 8.
- 4.27. With regard to criterion 9, the site is not within a mineral safeguarding area.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. The Lawns and Lakes camping and caravanning site was first established in 2009 and has now grown to become one of the district's best tourist accommodation sites, bringing in visitors from across the country.
- 5.2. The proposal is to regularise part of the existing use on site, and for the proposed extension to the existing building.
- 5.3. For at least the last 10 years, the site has operated in the manner set out in the application and there have been no known highway issues associated with the operation of the site.
- 5.4. A comprehensive planting scheme was carried out in accordance with the original grant of planning permission and the applicants continue to add to the array of tree and shrub species on site. The use within the site is not visible beyond the boundaries.
- 5.5. Mr and Mrs Pickett's ethos is one of enhancing biodiversity alongside the development on site and to ensure that, where ever possible, once visitors are on site, the use of the private car is minimised. This modal shift, together with the enhanced biodiversity, and significant contribution to the local economy results in a sustainable form of development.
- 5.6. The proposal accords with the provisions of the development plan, national planning guidance and is acceptable in all other respects.

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