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Mr P Jackson
Planning Manager
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Council Offices
Priory Road
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Dear Sir

DRAFT PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Change of Use of Land to Touring Caravan and Camping Site at Lazy Acre, Caravan Site, Little Dog Drove, Holbeach St John, Spalding for Mr E McGowan

I refer to the Council's decision (Application Code: H09-029-13) in respect of an application submitted under Section 191 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 which related to the use of the above site for camping and caravanning. As your file records will reveal, the Council refused to grant a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development, determining the use of the land to be not lawful for the purposes of Section 101 of the 1990 Act.

Without prejudice to the future resubmission of an application under Section 191, I am now instructed to submit an application for full planning permission proposing a change of use to a touring caravan and camping use of the land.

The site has a considerable history. There is no dispute that the land has been used for this purpose for a number of years. Indeed, there is documentary evidence that it was first afforded "certificated location" status as long ago as 2004 by the Caravan and Camping Club. As the Council is aware, that status was withdrawn in 2015, notwithstanding that it may be reinstated in the near future.

Very significantly, however, planning permission was granted by the Council on 10 June 2010 (code: H09-0333-10) for the erection of a proposed utility/amenity building at the site. The recent application for a non-material amendment to that planning permission (code: H09-0566-15) was the subject of the Council's approval on 21 September 2015. It is, clear that in deciding, having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations, that planning permission should be granted, there was an acceptance of the ongoing caravan and camping site use. Indeed, the reason for imposing condition 3 of the original grant of planning permission was stated to be:



“To ensure that the building is used solely for a purpose ancillary to the existing touring caravan and camping site and not for residential purposes. Residential use would be contrary to the provisions of Policy HS7 of the South Holland Local Plan 2006 and Planning Policy Statement 7 “Sustainable Development in Rural Areas”, both of which seek to control new residential development in the open countryside”.

The Reason for Approval indicated that the proposal was in accordance with policies LT7, SG13, SG14, SG15, SG16 & SG17 of the South Holland Local Plan 2006. The reasoning added:

“Concerns raised relating to the size and nature of the development, visual impact, amenity, ecology and highway safety had been carefully assessed, but are outweighed in this case by policies in favour of the proposal and other material considerations, including the imposition of appropriate conditions”.

Nevertheless, as I trust that the Council will understand, the owners of the site who, temporarily, have not been accepting bookings during this summer because of the suspension of certificated location status, wish to establish, without any doubt, the lawfulness of a touring caravan and camping site at this location.

The Proposal

The attached Block Plan (JC/M228/4) shows the site layout including, in particular, the position of the utility/amenity building, the temporary building to its rear and the location of the existing septic tank, chemical toilet disposal facilities, waste water disposal facilities, fresh water access point and existing portable toilet which will be replaced at such time as the utility/amenity building is taken into use.

Drawing JC/M228/4 shows the existing site access, the location of the adjacent surface water soakaway system, the site layout for approximately 15 touring caravans and the provision of an area reserved for tented camping. The existing site roadway and the provision for a Site Manager’s mobile accommodation are also denoted.

The site is located approximately 1.4 km from the junction between Little Dog Drove and Jekil’s Bank where, opposite Nutts Lane there are bus stops on routes FO42 and FO44.

The proposal will utilise Little Dog Drove as the sole vehicular access. This highway serves a limited number of properties but it is of a width that is commensurate with its proposed usage. The highway provides a number of points where vehicles can wait, allowing one travelling in the opposite direction to pass.



The site has an existing hard surfaced entrance from Little Dog Drove and benefits from an internal circulatory system so that all vehicles can enter and leave the development in a forward gear. This is illustrated on drawing: JC/M228/4.

The individual touring caravan pitches will be provided with electricity hook-up points and none of the existing peripheral and internal planting will be disturbed by the site's layout.

Relevant Planning Policies

The Development Plan

For the purposes of Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan, as relevant to this application, comprises the "saved" policies of the South Holland Local Plan (July 2006). It is considered that there are a number of policies, for the most part in accordance with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) which apply so that, in accordance with Paragraph 215 of the Framework, they should continue to be given substantial weight in the making of a decision on this application, unless other material considerations indicate to the contrary:

- Policy SG1 – General Sustainable Development
- Policy SG4 – Development in the Countryside
- Policy SG9 – Development and Flood Risk
- Policy SG11 – Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Policy SG12 – Sewerage and Development
- Policy SG13 – Pollution and Contamination
- Policy SG14 – Design and Layout of new Development
- Policy SG15 – New Development: Facilities for Road Users, Pedestrians and Cyclists
- Policy SG16 – Parking Standards in New Development
- Policy SG 17 – Protection of Residential Amenity
- Policy SG18 – Landscaping of New Development
- Policy LT1 – Leisure Recreation and Tourist Facilities
- Policy LT7 – Caravan Sites

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- Paragraph 14 – the presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Paragraph 17 – core planning principles
- Paragraph 19 & 21 – building a strong, competitive economy
- Paragraph 28 – supporting a prosperous rural economy



Policy Considerations

Policy SG1, relating to General Sustainable Development, is permissive where the Council is satisfied that the proposal accords with the principles of sustainable development and the quality of life for residents is unimpaired or enhanced. Whilst, inter-alia, South Holland's essential character and main and environmental assets are not damaged, planning permission will be granted. The promotion of a strong rural economy is also one of the central themes of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 28 applies). It seeks to promote a strong rural economy through encouraging business and enterprise in rural areas and by promoting the development of land-based rural businesses and supporting sustainable rural tourism. The way in which this development achieves that objective whilst respecting the character of the countryside is set out below.

The Local Plan Proposals Map shows the application site without notation; it is clearly one to which countryside policies, as reflected in policy SG4, apply. Within the open countryside planning permission will only be granted which is essential and cannot reasonably be accommodated within defined settlement limits. Development proposals which would result in an unacceptable impact upon the landscape character of an area will only be permitted in specified circumstances. Nevertheless, the caravan and camping site business is well-established here, through successive ownerships, and the Council has previously determined, for example, that the proposal for the amenity building accords with local planning policies. Much of the enjoyment of this location is by persons who value the open Fenland landscape and also by those who wish to take advantage of local recreational facilities such as, for example, the nearby Fenland Airfield, Sinclair's Shooting Ground and the walking facilities afforded by the very close proximity of Fleet Fen. The existing landscaping of the site renders it relatively inconspicuous and it is not an intrusive feature.

Policy SG9 and Policies SG11 – 13 relate to various flood risk, drainage matters and pollution and contamination considerations. Whilst the site is located within Flood Zone 3, it is not considered that, in this instance, a full Flood Risk Assessment is necessary having regard to the site's limited area, the background of long-term previous usage of the site and the existence of all its core facilities, including a package foul drainage treatment plant and established site drainage. The drainage system is designed to discharge so that it does not generate significant off-site run off, so avoiding any increased flood risk locally. Accordingly, the requirements of policy SG11 are satisfied. An existing, approved foul drainage disposal facility accords with the requirements of policy SG12. It is highly unlikely that this small-scale development will cause an unacceptable level of pollution of the surrounding area by reason of noise, light, toxic or offensive odours, airborne pollutants or by the release of waste products. Facilities for the collection and disposal of refuse will accord with those administered in the area by the Council.

The site has already been sympathetically laid out and it has been absorbed into its surroundings by sensitive landscaping. The amenity building is being constructed to a high standard whilst the peripheral planting and other landscaping have become well-established.



The entrance and exit to and from the site meet normal highway standards and each serviced unit, whether for a touring caravan or for camping, is capable of having an adjacent parking space. Parking and manoeuvring facilities are such that vehicles can all enter and leave the site in forward gear. The site layout facilitates full circulation by persons of limited mobility. As an entirely self-contained site, benefitting from a seasonal warden's presence, there are unlikely to be any adverse crime prevention considerations.

The development provides for safe and convenient access for road users of all kinds in satisfaction of the requirements of policy SG15. Little Dog Drove carries only insubstantial vehicle movements and is entirely capable of being used as a "shared surface" by pedestrians, particularly those who wish to take benefit from the footpath system along Fleet Fen, a little over 400 metres distant. The policy is therefore satisfied, as are the requirements of policy SG16 for the reasons set out above.

Policy SG17 rightly seeks to ensure the protection of residential amenity. The development at this site introduces no issue of overlooking or loss of privacy for any nearby resident nor, moreover, will the use of the land have any overbearing or overshadowing effect. The limited vehicular activity that will be associated with the use at most times of the year is easily capable of being absorbed into its surroundings. There are no adverse implications in respect of smell, emissions and pollutants.

Reference has been made above to the existing landscaping at the site. This application proposes the retention of all existing trees and hedgerows and it does not have any adverse impact on other attractive landscape features. The applicant is, however, prepared to carry out further tree planting, should the Council consider it necessary and is keen to foster the maintenance of wildlife habitats and corridors. Indeed, experience is to the effect that many visitors enjoy that aspect of stays at this site.

This Planning Statement now turns to two key policies namely policy LT1 in respect of the provision of leisure, recreation and tourist facilities and policy LT7 that deals specifically with caravan sites. Paragraph 7.2 of the Local Plan says that the South Holland District is not, at present, a major tourist destination despite its unique open landscape and other attributes. The Council wishes, as tourism gains momentum as a growth sector in the economy, to encourage and guide its development. This Statement emphasises that there are significant advantages to be gained by a grant of planning permission in this instance. Experience over several years has been to the effect that many users of the site value the unique fenland landscape and that this is, moreover, a major reason for their stays. The development of such sites is, therefore, not only compliant with the policies of the Local Plan but particularly accordant with the Government's policies set out in Section 3 of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to support a prosperous rural economy.

Paragraph 7.30 of the Local Plan sets out the Council's recognition that caravanning and camping are part of the recreational pursuits and provide flexible tourist accommodation that



can be of great benefit to the local economy. Whilst proposals for caravan and camp sites must meet strict criteria and minimise the impact on the landscape, paragraph 7.32 indicates that the number of pitches proposed will be a key consideration in assessing the impact of proposals. It indicates that "small sites associated with existing rural businesses that can be successfully assimilated into the landscape are more likely to be acceptable". This is a relatively small scale proposal, due to the limited number of pitches for both touring caravans and caravans that are proposed. Whilst access is clearly an important consideration, it is not considered that users of the site will be wholly reliant on the motor car during their stays and the B1168 at the junction between Jekil's Bank and New River Gate is close at hand from the point of view of ready access to the strategic road network. The nature of the junctions between Little Dog Drove and Jekil's Bank and between the two highways above is regarded satisfactory in terms of exit visibility and the ability of drivers to manoeuvre safely when touring.

It is emphasised that occupancy of this site will be restricted to genuine holiday visits. The associated building has already been sensitively designed and is of a scale commensurate with the size of the site. It is not considered that the proposal will be harmful to the amenity of any existing residents in the area. The site is not at high risk of flooding or rapid inundation and the existing foul and surface water drainage systems are regarded as "fit for purpose".

Taking into account all these considerations, it is considered that this is a sustainable rural development that justifies the Council's support. The grant of planning permission will regularise the existing land use situation and provide for the Council increased control over the proposed development. It is generally in accord with the Council's policies set out in the Local Plan and with the key principles enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework. There are not considered to be any material considerations that would override the presumption in favour of the development and it is, therefore, requested that planning permission be granted.

If, however, you require any further clarification of the applicant's intentions or further details with regard to the development, I shall be grateful if you will contact me as soon as possible after the validation and registration of the application. The fee for the planning application will be submitted separately as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

John Church
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