

WOODBURY
(Woodbury and Lympstone)

06/2661/FUL
(FULL)

14.11.06.

Applicant: Webbers Farm Caravan Park

Location: Woodbury
(Grid Ref: 301772/87334)

Proposal: Use of land at existing touring park to provide fourteen additional touring pitches

Consultations

County Highway Authority
No objection

Environment Agency
No objection subject to separation of clean surface/roof water from foul drainage

Environmental Health
No comments to make

Planning History

The planning records of this site indicate that the caravan park commenced operating in the early 1980's and since then it has been the subject of a number of applications for various elements of the overall use, including extensions to the static and touring pitches, storage areas, toilet/shower buildings and changes of use. Most of these have been permitted, to create the park as it exists today.

Representations

1 letter of objection has been received.

Summary of Objections

Make two strong recommendations in the event of permission being granted. That the belt of trees screening their property from the park is given statutory protection and that visitors towing caravans should be directed to approach the site from the top of Castle Lane i.e. from Woodbury Common.

There is a primary school at the end of the lane where the road narrows and this should be taken into account in terms of the safety of children in the area.

Parish/Town Council

Recommend refusal – Members pointed out some works have already been carried out. Concern was expressed over increased vehicular movements in Castle Lane and passing the Primary School. It was considered a traffic impact assessment should be made. It was also a concern that drainage might need to be reviewed. It was also considered that more information was required to enable an 'in depth' response to be made.

Ward Members

No views expressed.

Location

Webbers Farm Caravan Park is located along the south side of Castle Lane, on the extreme western outskirts of Woodbury. It is a large park, with a licence for 157 pitches. It is a well established site, which for the most part is screened from public view by trees and hedgerows around its perimeter and along Castle Lane in particular.

The area of land to which this application relates is towards the southern end of the site.

The Proposed Development

To utilise an area of an existing part of the park for siting an additional 14 touring caravans. The actual area involved has historically been used as a pet/wildlife area, housing goats, sheep, ponies and rabbits. These would be relocated on another open area of land to the south-east that is currently used as nature walk and dog exercise area.

This part of the site is surrounded by existing pitches. As the Parish Council points out, some work has started on the preparation of this site for the pitches, by sculpturing the earth across its east-west slope.

Planning Policy

Devon Structure Plan 2001 – 2016

- TO3 Tourist Development in Rural Areas
- TO4 Touring Parks and Camping Sites

Adopted East Devon Local Plan

- TO4 Caravan, Chalet and Camping Sites

The recently published Department for Communities Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism is also relevant here. This recognizes the local value of tourism and emphasises the Government's aims in PPS 7 to carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities for static and touring caravan parks, with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites.

Observations

This application proposes an increase of some 8.9% of pitches within the existing, established caravan park at Webbers Farm. The applicant's case for an increase in pitches is based upon the popularity of the park, and their inability to cope with the number of holiday makers that wish to use it. They claim to have to turn away a high number of visitors and now wish to cater for some of those by the addition of these 14 pitches. A list of some 82 potential visitors that have been turned away during the recent season has been provided to support this claim.

They would be located in two rows of 7, running north to south across the central sloping site, with a 2m wide access track between the rows, that leads off the existing circular track that runs around and through the site.

Policy TO4 of the recently adopted Local Plan precludes extensions to existing caravan parks in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Coastal Preservation Area or Areas of Great Landscape Value. This site lies outside of any of those specific areas. Elsewhere permission for the extension of existing sites and related ancillary facilities will be permitted in accordance with Policy T04 provided certain criteria are met, relating to demand, sensitivity in scale and siting, close proximity to an existing settlement, but not impacting upon the character or setting of the settlement, would not use best and most versatile agricultural land, can be provided with adequate water and sewage disposal facilities and traffic generated by the proposal can be accommodated safely on the local highway network.

As far as visual impact is concerned, the site upon which the 14 units would be located is in the centre of an area of the park that is already surrounded by existing pitches and it is felt that the use of these 14 pitches would not have any real impact upon the visual amenity or character of the surrounding area, such that a refusal of permission could be justified on that ground. In policy terms the proposal would relate sensitively in scale and siting to its surroundings. The site is already extensively screened, but the applicant's agent has indicated that the pattern of landscaping that already exists within the park will be repeated with the introduction of some amenity trees within the new area, replicating the surrounding areas.

The issue of highway safety has been raised by the Parish Council and nearby residents. However, the County Highway Authority has concluded that the traffic associated with these 14 pitches could be satisfactorily accommodated within the local highway network and that the existing access could cope with the additional movements arising from the increase.

Having regard to all material planning considerations it is felt that this modest extension to the number of touring pitches at the application site is acceptable, subject to the imposition of conditions designed to preclude permanent stationing of caravans on the site.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

1. The maximum number of caravans to be parked within the application site shown in red on the site plan shall be 14 and the layout shall be in accordance with plan No. PPS/1 unless any minor modifications are agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason – In the interests of the character and appearance of the site.)
2. No one caravan shall remain on the site for a period longer than four weeks in any one year.
(Reason - The caravan and/or site are unsuitable for permanent residential occupation.)
3. The site should be drained on a separate system of foul and surface water drainage. With all clean roof and surface water being kept separate from foul drainage.
(Reason – To prevent pollution of the water environment.)

Reasons for Approval

The proposal complies with the relevant provisions of Policy TO4 of the adopted East Devon District Local Plan 1995-2011 relating to Caravan, Chalet and Camping Sites.

List of Background Papers

The file containing all letters, consultations, and documents referred to in the report.