

MEETING:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	7 NOVEMBER 2012
TITLE OF REPORT:	S121503/F - PROPOSED CAMPSITE FOR 5 DEMOUNTABLE TENTS (6 MONTHS HOLIDAY SEASON) AT UPPER HOUSE FARM, BACTON, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE HR2 0AU For: Mr Robey per Mr Kim Cooper, Heald Partnership, Garnets Orchard, Poorscript Lane, Grosmont, Monmouth, NP7 8LP
WEBSITE LINK:	http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/planning/58286.aspx?ID=121503&NoSearch=True

Date Received: 22 May 2012

Ward: Golden Valley South

Grid Ref: 336000,231979

Expiry Date: 17 July 2012

Local Member: Councillor GJ Powell

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises an area of upland located in the north western part of this 180 acre farm. The farm is based around the applicant's listed stone rubble farmhouse together with a two storey bunkhouse and listed oak framed barn recently renovated and repaired. This farmstead is accessed off the eastern side of an unclassified road (u/c 74209), at a point 900 metres south of its junction with the C1209 road that leads eastwards and down hill into Bacton.
- 1.2 Access is via a stoned track leading eastwards initially before turning due north a distance of 640 metres. The land inclines north-west to south-east from the aforementioned unclassified road through grassland fringed by hedgerow then onto the farmhouse, continuing to Holling Grange Dingle.
- 1.3 The proposal entails the siting of 5 tents aligned roughly east to west in a field above and to the northwest of the farmhouse. They will be sited 25 metres apart in a semi circular configuration along the southern and western boundaries of the site. A public footpath which starts at the unclassified road leads eastwards before emerging to the north of the site and then continues downhill across the applicant's property. There would be no vehicular access for occupants of these structures. Instead, parking would be in an area 80 metres south west of the farmhouse, on a site presently used for outside storage in connection with the farm. Visitors would then be taken to the camp site, 240 metres away, which is not only screened from view from the car parking area but also from the farmhouse.
- 1.4 The 5 demountable tents will be erected for a period of 6 months per year. The tents are erected over wooden slated bases, three of which have already been installed and one is covered by a green coloured tent. The applicant states that the erection of this tent has been undertaken in order to gauge its impact in the wider landscape. Each tent will cover an area 5 metres wide and 11.25 metres long. The ridge height of the structures will be 3.15 metres. Each tent will sleep up to 6 people, will include easy chairs, wood-fired ovens and will

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Andrew Prior on 01432 261932

incorporate shower/WC facilities. It is stated in the accompanying Design and Access Statement that the camp site will provide a base for guests to discover the Black Mountains, the Brecon Beacons and other scenic, cultural and outdoor activity attractions. The tents will be sited away from the edge of the adjacent woodland, which is in third party ownership, and which is demarcated by existing fencing and barbed wire. A buffer zone of between 15 to 20 metres is proposed, which will be planted with a mix of deciduous trees. The existing timber post/stock proof wire fence will be repaired when and where necessary.

- 1.5 Visitors will be required to sign an undertaking not to trespass onto neighbouring land and woodland. No dogs, with the exception of guide dogs, will be allowed on the site. All firewood will be provided for guests obviating the need for foraging in the nearby woodland.

2. Policies

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

It is considered that sections 1 (Building a strong, competitive economy), 3 (Supporting a prosperous rural economy) and 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment) are particularly relevant to this application

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007 (HUDP):

S1	-	Sustainable development
S2	-	Development requirements
DR1	-	Design
DR2	-	Land use and activity
DR3	-	Movement
RST1	-	Criteria for recreation, sport and tourism development
RST13	-	Rural and farm tourism
RST14	-	Static caravans, chalets, camping and tour caravan sites
LA2	-	Landscape and areas least resilient to change
LA5	-	Protection of trees, woodlands and hedgerows
LA6	-	Landscaping schemes
NC1	-	Biodiversity and development
NC7	-	Compensation for loss of biodiversity
NC8	-	Habitat creation, restoration and enhancement
T8	-	Road hierarchy
T11	-	Parking provision

- 2.3 The Unitary Development Plan policies together with any relevant supplementary planning documentation can be viewed on the Councils website by using the following link:-

<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/planning/29815.aspp>

3. Planning History

- 3.1 S/120554/S – Portal frame barn – Prior Approval Not Required - 30.03.12
- 3.2 S/110721/L – Various works and repairs to oak framed barn – Approved - 09.05.11

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 None applicable

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 The Traffic Manager does not object on the basis of this proposal for 5 tents but any further significant intensification would necessitate improvements to the existing access to the west.
- 4.3 The Conservation Manager (Landscapes) supports the application advising that it demonstrates that a balance has been struck between the negative impact of new structures and the conservation objectives and sensitive site management. It is stated that the woodland area should be the subject of a management and maintenance plan and that full details of the car park will need to be made the condition of any planning permission granted.
- 4.4 The Public Rights of Way Manager has no objections
- 4.5 The Conservation Manager (Senior Ecologist) states that the findings of the Swift ecology are agreed as regards the low biodiversity interest of the field in which the tents will be sited. The buffer zone is welcomed, hay strewing from nearby species rich meadows and the introduction of specific planting is also welcomed. A condition needs to be attached requiring details for habitat enhancement before first use of the site.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Abbey Dore & Bacton Group Parish Council resolved by majority not to support the application. The comment goes on to say:
- There is no objection in principal to this type of diversification;
 - That previous objections would be nullified by the proposed site being closer to the applicant's farmhouse and;
 - It has been brought to our attention that one of the proposed structures had been erected already.
- 5.2 St Margarets Parish Council has no comments
- 5.3 The Woodland Trust states that it is glad to see a buffer zone. This should be maintained for a minimum period of 10 years. They welcome signed agreements between visitors and recognising the need for compliance with countryside code. Also an interpretation board should be erected near the public footpath. There should be no collection of any wood as dead wood provides habitat. Also, the existing fence should be maintained for the lifetime of the camp site in order to protect adjoining woodland.
- 5.4 Visit Herefordshire write in support of the proposal. It is stated that the proposal will appeal to new and emerging market.
- 5.3 Eleven letters of objection have been received from local residents and the CPRE. These are summarised as follows:
- Bacton has no facilities and nothing to gain from development
 - Legal right of access for timber extraction, buffer zone cannot be fully implemented
 - Not sustainable development
 - Contrary to Policies LA2 and LA5: as not clear how proposal has been influenced by the landscape
 - Little scope to ameliorate impact
 - Away from view of applicant's farmhouse
 - Visual impact demonstrated already by erected green uPvc and aluminium tent. It does not blend in

- Site needs to be well screened from view points and public places. Therefore contrary to Policy RST13
- Footpath users would come across tents
- Better to site closer to farmhouse away from sensitive habitat and would provide enhanced supervision and restrict human activity to existing areas
- Site is very close to my woodland
- Buffer zone would take time to establish
- Fire hazard
- Concerns about guests trespassing and infringing privacy
- Degradation of land
- Dogs roaming problem. Welcomes only guide dogs but how can this be enforced?
- Light pollution
- Noise and disturbance
- Within our earshot due to prevailing south westerly wind direction
- Contrary Policy E15 as greenfield site.
- Environment Impact Assessment required
- Question capacity of existing septic tank
- Needs to be demonstrated that proposal would not have adverse impact on wildlife habitats and protected species (Policies NC1 and NC8). Evidence bats use Ancient Woodland
- How will parking of vehicles close to site be policed ?
- No condition could be imposed that would restrict cars parking at the site
- Additional traffic requires passing places that would have an adverse impact on the landscape
- Policies RST1, RST6, RST12, RST13 and RST14 not heeded
- Landscape Officer's response flawed via a vis impact of tents for users of public footpath. The ideal strategy is avoidance of impacts

5.4 In a supporting letter that accompanied the application the following main points are made:

- The tents are uPvc and green and not uPvc as stated in accompanying statement
- Tents will be erected in spring and taken down in autumn
- Outline of tents similar to portal frame agricultural sheds
- There is a good fence between site and woodland, consisting of tantalised stakes, pig netting with strand barb on top
- Will plant up to 50 per cent density on buffer zone of between 15-20 metres between fence and tents
- Route of public footpath not affected
- Existing legal agreement as regards woodland management. Not intended to change or interfere
- Ground is level. Site not visible from road or from neighbouring buildings. Nearest building visible 2.5 miles away at Kerry's Gate
- The tents will provide an interesting incident for walkers on footpath
- No cars on site or dogs
- Details for car-parking area will be provided as well as for pedestrian route between car park and site
- The pasture of two adjoining fields is improved pasture. Productive, but not good for rich species
- Guests will be told to keep out of woodland. Wood will be provided for use in bags
- Septic tank will be of the appropriate capacity
- No electricity on site. Hurricane lamps and candles will be used.
- Two blocks of woodland near to site are not classed as Ancient Woodland
- In Higher Level Stewardship. Leave rushes to grow for birds, leave anthills for the woodpeckers and restoring stone barn
- Franchise called Featherdown Farms supply tents to farmers. Look at web-site for idea of who visits and how they are run

5.5 In a further letter received from the applicant, in response to objections received. The following main points are made :

- Questions impact on neighbours given how far they live away from the site
- Woodland is not an ancient semi-natural woodland. It is an Oak and Ash wood with a section of larch planted a 100 years ago
- Larch needs regular maintenance and felling. List of flora cited are common around area
- Access to woodland a civil matter not a planning one
- Ecological issues addressed by buffer zone. Environmental Officer, Landscape Officer, Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission do not object
- Not visible from Upper Grange Farm as stated
- Guests will not bring dogs Two woods both have waist high brambles in any case
- Family nearby don't want change, except for themselves
- Chairman of Parish Council does not see any reason to object
- Guests will be young families and middle aged couples, don't want stag parties
- Aim is to provide activities for children. We will have an animal farm nearby with hens and ducks, lambs, alpacas and ponies and rare breeds

5.6 The consultation responses can be viewed on the Council's website by using the following link:-

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/planning/searchplanningapplications.aspx

Internet access is available at the Council's Customer Service Centres:-

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/community_and_living/consumer_advice/41840.asp

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The main issues in relation to this application are considered to relate to the principle of establishing a camp site in this isolated rural location, the visual impact on the landscape and upon biodiversity, the proposal's sustainability, the impact on residential amenity and the means of access to this site.

6.2 This proposal needs to be determined with reference to policies in the Unitary Development Plan and the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Of particular relevance Policies RST1 which relates to the general requirements for tourism development, Policy; RST13 which is concerned with rural and farm tourism and Policy RS14 which in part is concerned with camping sites, as well as static caravan and touring caravan sites.

6.3 There is encouragement for sustainable development on agricultural land in Policies RST1, RST13 and RST14 of the HUDP. Policy RST13 requires that development should not harm the character of the countryside and requires that traffic generated should be capable of being accommodated on the local road network without undue need for road widening and loss of hedgerows. This development is for demountable tents that have a backdrop of established woodland. The view from public vantage points is primarily from the north east from the C1209 road approximately 500 metres away. It is considered that the visual impact of the tents can be ameliorated by controlling the period that the tents are erected together with the colour of the canvas, such that the 5 tents will be of a colour such that the 3.15 metres high structures will have a dark silhouette when viewed against the woodland to the south and west of the camp site. It has also been stated in representations received that it is not clear how the proposal has been influenced by the landscape as required by Policy LA2 of Unitary Development Plan. It is acknowledged that this is an elevated location, however the use of the site will not have an adverse and irrevocable impact in the landscape. The 15-20 metre wide buffer zone planting between the and the adjacent woodland will serve to enhance not only the landscape but also the biodiversity of the site.

- 6.6 Users of the footpath will come across the camp site as stated in representations received. However this is not considered to be a factor that in itself would have an adverse impact on the enjoyment of walkers crossing the applicant's property. Therefore, as regards the impact in the landscape, subject to conditions controlling the duration of use, the colour of tents, the maintenance of the planting in the buffer zone and restricting lighting it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policies DR1, RST1, RST13, RST14, LA2, LA5 and LA6 of the HUDP.
- 6.7 It is not considered that the proposal will have an adverse impact on the biodiversity of the existing site and indeed as has been stated above the establishment of further planting of deciduous species will enhance the biodiversity value of this part of the applicant's property. It is not considered that the relative proximity of the camp site to the woodland in third party ownership will have an adverse impact on the biodiversity of that land. Issues relating to trespass and dogs roaming are matters that fall outside the remit of planning legislation. Details for habitat enhancement will though need to be the subject of a planning condition, as recommended by the Council's Senior Ecologist.
- 6.8 With regard to the sustainability of the proposal, Policies S1 and RST1 of the HUDP are considered to be relevant. These have regard to the need to support development proposals that are less reliant on the use of private motor vehicles. Whilst, it is acknowledged that this site will be predominantly accessed by motor vehicle this needs to be weighed against the fact that the proposal will support the existing agricultural activities operated by the applicant. Furthermore, it seems clear that the proposal is aimed at attracting visitors to the area in view of its scenic qualities and opportunities for walking. This in itself will indirectly support other services and facilities in the locality. Therefore, it is considered that the potential benefits of this proposal in terms of supporting the expansion tourism and its limited visual impact upon the character of the area, outweigh the reliance upon access by private car and as such the proposal satisfies Policies S1, RST1, RST13 and RST14 of the HUDP.
- 6.9 The potential impact of the proposal upon residential amenity has been raised by a number of objectors. These relate primarily to the proximity of the site to dwellings, light pollution, the impact of the tents on the hillside, noise and disturbance and the possibility of vehicles being driven up to the site, in spite of the stated intention for visitors to park in a new dedicated car-park. In general terms it is considered that that the site is sufficient distance from the nearest property to the north east, some 400 metres away to overcome any significant adverse impact upon the amenities of existing residents in the locality. Therefore, subject to a condition controlling the management of the site (including parking, lighting arrangements, the provision of firewood and the conduct of guests) the proposal would satisfy the requirements of Policies DR2 and RST1 of the HUDP. It is not clear how privacy would be infringed unless this relates to concerns about trespass onto private land. Trespassing would be a civil/criminal matter that is not material to the consideration of this application. However, the introduction of a buffer zone and the agreement of a site management plan provide appropriate mitigation in respect of these concerns.
- 6.10 The final issue relates to highway safety. This site is accessed off a network of narrow roads. It is not considered that the provision of 5 tents will result in an adverse impact on highway safety given the small scale of the proposal and the limited duration of use. It is considered that the access at the junction onto the unclassified and the car parking provided is satisfactory and as such the proposal accords with Policies DR3, RST13, RST14, T8 and T11 of the HUDP.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. **F34 Numbers limitation**

Reason: In the interests of safeguarding residential and visual amenity in accordance with Policies DR2 and LA2 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and limiting the increase in associated vehicular activity in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies DR3 and T8 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

2. **The tents hereby approved shall only be erected between 1 April and 30 September in any calendar year and outside of these times shall be dismantled and removed from the site.**

Reason: In the interest of minimising their impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and to accord with Policy LA2 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

3. **C01 Samples of external materials**

4. **G02 Retention of trees and hedgerows**

5. **G10 Landscaping scheme (to include a management plan and details of landscape maintenance arrangements)**

6. **G11 Landscaping scheme - implementation**

7. **H13 Access, turning area and parking**

8. **I17 Scheme of foul drainage disposal**

9. **Prior to the first occupation of any of the tents subject of this permission, a Site Management Plan setting out the commitments to the parking of guests, the use of lighting, the provision of firewood, the no dog policy (excepting guide dogs) and the conduct of guests will be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The site will be used in accordance with the approved Site Management plan thereafter.**

Reason: In the interests of safeguarding residential and visual amenity and in order to accord with Policies DR2 and LA2 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

10. **Prior to commencement of the development, a habitat enhancement scheme should be submitted to and be approved in writing by the local planning authority, and the scheme shall be implemented as approved. An appropriately qualified and experienced ecological clerk of works should be appointed (or consultant engaged in that capacity) to oversee the ecological mitigation and enhancement work.**

Reason: In order to ensure that diversity is enhanced and conserved in accordance with the requirements of Policies NC1, NC6 and NC7 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

Reason for Approval

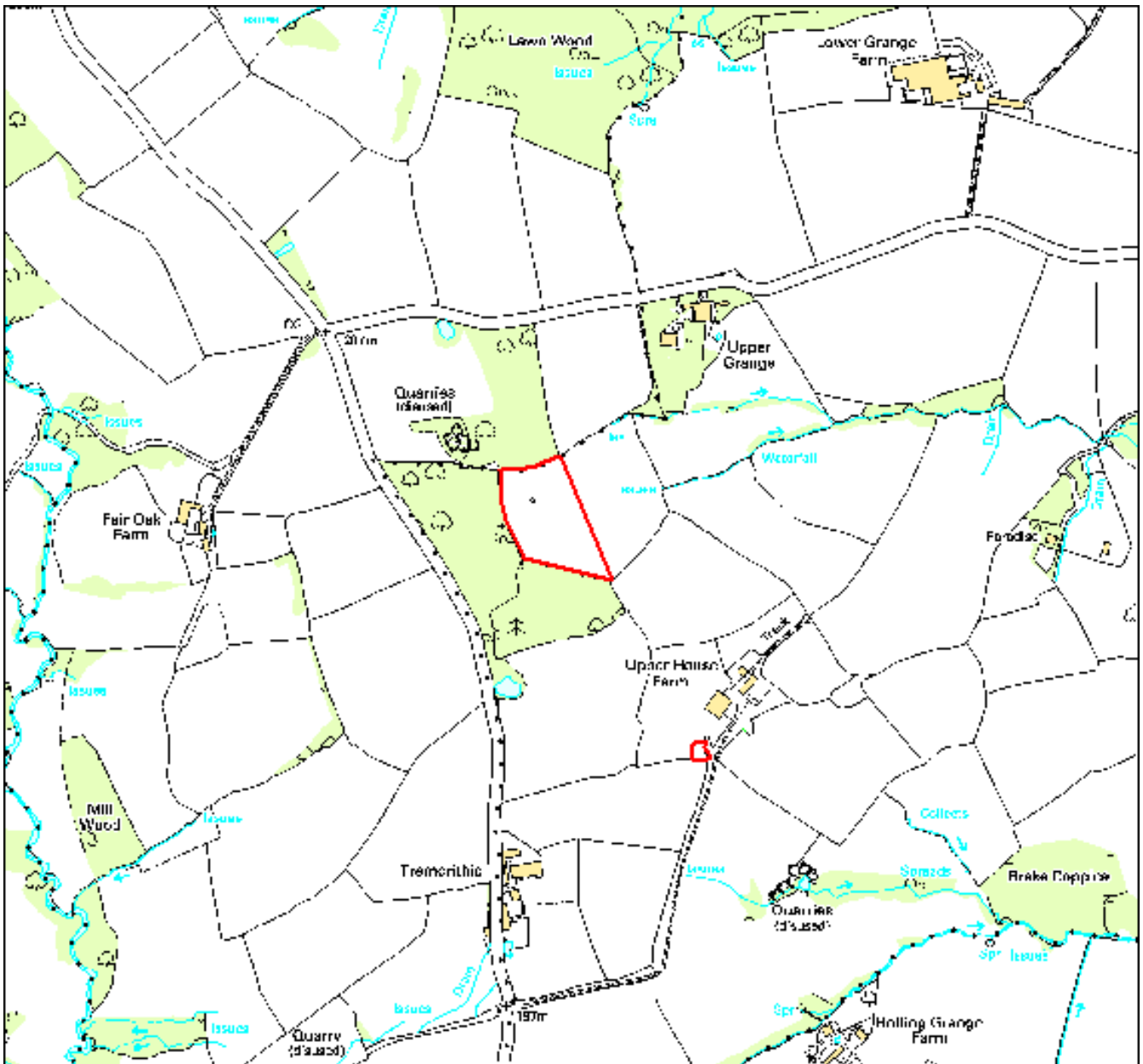
- 1. It was considered that the use of the site for up to 5 tents on this elevated site would not adversely affect the character of the landscape by reason of its small scale, the limited duration of their presence, controlling the colour of the canvas colour, together with the additional planting proposed and the presence of existing woodland that forms a backdrop of established trees. The impact of the development would be further mitigated by the intention of parking vehicles close to the existing farm buildings, limiting the use of lighting on the site and securing a Site Management Plan. It is recognised that the site is car dependant. However it constitutes the small scale diversification of an agricultural enterprise for which a range of amenities will be provided for visitors and which will support the growth of rural based tourism and attendant benefits it provides to existing services and facilities. The site currently has limited biodiversity value and this development will offer an enhancement through the additional planting proposed between the site and the established woodland. The biodiversity value of the nearby woodland would be adequately protected by the provision of this 15-20 metres wide planting zone. The use of the site will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of residents in the locality by reason of noise and disturbance given the distance from nearby properties. The traffic generated by the proposal will not have an adverse impact on highway safety in the locality given the scale and seasonal use of the site. Therefore, the proposal accords with Policies S1, S2, DR1, DR2, DR3, RST1, RST13, RST14, LA2, LA5, LA6, NC1, NC7, NC8, T8 and T11 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan together with the guidance contained within of chapters 1, 3 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Decision:

Notes:

Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: S/121503/F

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