

Officer Report

Case Reference: 25/00648/FUL
Location: Piethorne Valley Touring Caravan & Camping Site
Huddersfield Road
Newhey
Rochdale
OL16 3TA
Proposal: Change of use and replacement of 3no. touring caravan pitches with 2no. static holiday caravans (part retrospective)
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Majid Mir

SITE

The application site relates primarily to three touring caravan pitches sited within Piethorne Valley Touring Caravan and Camping Site. The site was granted planning permission to be used as a caravan and camping site through planning permission 10/D53112. The site is located within the Green Belt and approximately 300m from the Defined Urban Area. The site is accessed from Huddersfield which leads to Newhey. Newhey Village Centre is approximately 1 mile west along Huddersfield road and approximately 25-30 minute walking distance. The site is located approximately 0.6miles from Newhey Tram Stop and approximately 10-15 walking distance from the tram stop.

To the east and southeast of the site are two rows of terrace properties used as dwellings. The dwellings are set on higher ground and set off Huddersfield Road. To the west the site is bounded by Piethorne Brook. Further west there is a woodland.

PROPOSAL

The application proposes to replace three touring caravan pitches and site two static caravans. One static caravan is already sited on the site and therefore the application is part retrospective.

The plans indicate that the static caravans will be 3.65m wide, 8.5m in length and 3.3m in height.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

JP-S1 - Sustainable Development

JP-G1 - Landscape Character

JP-G8 - A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

JP-G9 - The Green Belt

JP-P1 - Sustainable Places

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS)

SO1 - To deliver a more prosperous economy

E5 - Encouraging the visitor economy

E6 - Supporting and diversifying the rural economy

SO2 - Creating successful and healthy communities

C8 - Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities

SO3 - Improving Design, image and quality of place

P1 - Improving image

P3 - Improving design of new development

SO4 - Promoting a greener environment

G8 - Managing water resources and flood risk

G9 - Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

SO5 - Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

T2 - Improving accessibility

DM1 - General Development Requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

EM/7 - Development and Flood Risk

EM/8 - Protection of Surface and Ground Water

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Supplementary Planning Guidance note 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (June 2016).

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

24/00165/VRCON - Variation of condition 13 (Occupation Timeframes) of planning permission D53112 to allow the caravans, camping pods and tent pitches to be occupied from the 1st January to the 30th November. Decision: Withdrawn.

10/D53112 - Change Of Use Of Land To Touring Caravan & Camping Site With Ancillary Storage / Washroom. Decision: Grant subject to conditions.

DC00342 - Submission Of Information To Comply With Conditions 3 To 5 And 7 To 11 Of Planning Permission D53112. Decision: Grant subject to conditions.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Environmental Health (Noise/odour)

No response to date.

Highways And Engineering

The application site is off Huddersfield Road quite remote from any regular public transport options or local amenities. This is not a sustainable location. We expect no significant traffic generation from these two caravans. Whilst no parking provision is identified the site has adequate space for vehicles to stop away from the highway. We would not expect any additional changes of the highways adjacent to this property. We have no concerns regarding emergency access or the servicing of this location. We have no additional road safety concerns at this location.

Amendments to Consultation Response: No amendments to report

Officer Recommendation: We have no objections to this proposal.

Conditions: None

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

The application redline boundary incorporates an area of greenspace. Will this greenspace be incorporated into the two caravan's curtilage as formalised gardens?

If not, I have no comments.

REPRESENTATIONS

The site was publicised by neighbour notification and site notice. No representations have been received.

Principle of development - Green Belt

Chapter 13 of the NPPF states the objective of Green Belt policy 'is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence.'

Policy GB6 of the NPPF establishes that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Policy GB6 adds 'such circumstances will not exist unless

the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposed development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In making this assessment, substantial weight should be given to the harm to the Green Belt which would be caused, including harm to its openness.'

PfE Policy JP-G9 sets out that 'the beneficial use of the Green Belt will be enhanced where this can be achieved without harm to its openness, permanence or ability to serve its five purposes. In particular, the enhancement of its green infrastructure functions will be encouraged, such as improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits for our residents and providing the high-quality green spaces that will support economic growth'.

Policy GB7 of the NPPF identifies numerous categories of development that should not be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt and therefore should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or be required to demonstrate very special circumstances. Point (f) of policy GB7 states:

Certain other forms of development provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes. These are:

- i. Mineral extraction and processing, engineering operations, and transport, electricity network, water and telecommunications infrastructure required in a Green Belt location);
- ii. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order;
- iii. Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
- iv. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments.

The siting of the static caravans would not necessarily meet exception criteria (f); however, it is noted that the site is an established caravan and camping site. Planning permission for the use of the site as a caravan and camping site was granted in 2010 through planning application 10/D53112. The replacement of touring caravan pitches and siting of the static caravans would be considered an appropriate facility associated with the existing use of the site as an outdoor facility.

Therefore, consideration needs to be given whether the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Planning Practice Guidance provides advice on what factors can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on openness. This guidance clarifies that

assessing this impact requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case in question. Furthermore, the guidance gives a number of examples where the courts have identified a number of matters which might need to be taken into account in making the assessment. In summary these include, but are not limited to:

- Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects.
- The duration of the development, and its irremediability.
- The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation or use of the land by future occupiers.

As alluded to above, openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial as well as visual aspects. It is noted that planning permission was granted for touring caravans on the site, although there were no conditions restricting the type of caravan that could be placed on the pitches. Nevertheless, the description in the planning permission restricts the type of caravan to only touring caravans and does not allow for static caravans.

The application proposes to replace two of the existing touring caravan pitches with two static holiday caravans. The plans provided indicate that the proposed static caravans would be 8.5m in length, 3.65m wide and have a maximum height of 3.3m. In comparison, standard touring caravan sizes typically range between 5.0m to 8.0m in length, 2.2m to 2.5m in width and have a height of between 2.3 and 2.7m. Additionally, noting that campervans and motorhomes are motor vehicles designed or adapted for human habitation and capable of being readily moved, therefore they would generally fall within the broader category of touring caravans. Campervans and motorhomes can vary in size and can be up to 14m in length, although generally campervans and motorhomes are mostly no more than approximately 9m in length. They can be approximately up to 2.4m in width and approximately 3.4m in height. Although touring caravans will be generally smaller in scale than static caravans, there are however touring caravans, campervans and motorhomes that are not too dissimilar in scale to static caravans. It is noted that there are no restrictions to the scale of touring caravan that can be used on the site.

Therefore, the main difference between the touring caravan and the siting of static caravan would be the level of permanence and prominence over the existing arrangement. Condition 13 attached to planning permission 10/D53112 required that the caravans shall be occupied for holiday purposes, none are to be occupied between the last day of October and the first day of March, and there will be no storage of caravans on the site. It is clear this has not been the case, with caravans being sited on some of the pitches throughout the year.

Touring caravans are typically used differently to static caravan. Touring caravans will be typically easier to transport whereas static caravan by their nature will be less likely to be transported on a regular basis. A touring caravan will be driven on site and then driven out, whereas the static caravan will remain on site for an extended period of time. This means that views of touring caravans on site will be intermittent when compared to static caravans. As a static caravan will remain on site for an extended period of time, they will have a similar impact on the openness of the Green Belt as permanent structures. However, it is noted that static caravans are typically modest in scale and have similar scale and mass to a single storey structure. Therefore, when comparing to touring caravans to static caravans, there would be a greater impact on the visual and spatial aspects of the openness of the Green Belt.

Additionally, as the static caravans would be sited on the site for extended periods of time, include during the off season/winter months when touring caravans are not parked up on the

pitches, there would be a greater impact on the visual and spatial aspects of the openness of the Green Belt. It is however accepted that during the on season/summer months, the impact on the Green Belt would be very limited given that two static caravans would replace three caravan pitches and the static caravans would be used as holiday lets.

The site is located at the foot of Piethorne Valley, the site of the caravans is located on ground that is level with part of Huddersfield Road that is directly adjacent to the site. The land to the rear of the site of the proposed caravans is set on lower ground and is not visible from the highway. This is a part of the caravan and camping site. When travelling along Huddersfield Road to the east, the land rises up and the wider caravan and camping site is set on considerably lower ground. There are some longer views of the site from the east; however, views of the caravans would not be visible. Views of the caravans would be possible when directly in front of the entrance to the site and from in between the fencing on the boundary of the site. The boundary has a stone wall with a wire mesh fence. Behind the boundary treatment there are tall hedges. Further east there is a woodland. Therefore, the proposed static caravans would be fleeting and would only be limited views of the static caravans. Additionally, the caravans would be viewed in the context of the established caravan and camping site and adjacent to other caravans.

Due to the nature of static caravans, they will be placed on the site during the whole year and would be visible during off-season and during the winter months. However, the hedges on the site appear to the evergreen hedges that leave throughout the year and therefore the site would be screened throughout the year. Furthermore, the proposal will in effect see the replacement of three touring caravans with two static caravans and within the position of the pitches. Therefore, during on season, the mass and visual impact would not be too different. The impact could be further reduced through landscaping of the central grassed area with evergreen plants. This will further limit the views of the static caravans from the highway.

The site would retain its existing vehicular access. Whereas with touring caravan pitches, vehicles with caravans, or single vehicles such as campervans or motorhomes, would enter and leave the site during the on season, this would not be the case with static caravans. However, people will still enter and exist using their own vehicles. Owing to the existing use, cars and other vehicles would still be parked on site in association with the existing use. Due this, the impact on the openness of the Green Belt from addition of the vehicles of the customers using the static caravans intermittently would not be dissimilar to the existing arrangements. However, as the static caravans will be static throughout the year, there is a risk that the static caravans will be used throughout the year and thereby intensifying the use of the existing arrangements. This can be resolved through the inclusion the restriction of use to match that of the rest of the touring and camping site.

Additionally, as the proposed static caravans would be sited within an established caravan and camping site, the additional facilities and services required for such a use are already in place. It is noted that the application does not propose any alterations to the existing facilities or services available on the site. Therefore, this would not lead to any greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt over the existing arrangement.

Furthermore, there is a risk that the due to the nature of the static caravans, they become used for residential purposes rather than for holiday lets. This also can be conditioned so that the use is limited to holiday lets only.

In conclusion, the proposal would introduce two static caravans into the Green Belt. The static caravans would replace existing touring pitches and therefore would add a greater level of permanence over the existing arrangement. However, consideration is given to the proposed development leading to the reduction of pitches by one, being located in the same

position as the existing pitches, being sited within an established caravan and camping site, and the caravans being of modest scale. As such it is considered that the proposal would not alter the character and appearance of the area, nor would it significantly alter the impact on the openness of the Green Belt over the existing arrangement and would not conflict with the purpose of the Green Belt, in particular, it would not lead to an encroachment into the Green Belt. Subject to the addition of the relevant conditions, the replacement of three touring pitches with two static caravans, it is considered to be acceptable and would accord with the NPPF, PfE and Core Strategy.

Rural Economy

The NPPF states that the overall aim of policies in chapter 7 is to enable businesses, to invest, expand and adapt in a way that reflects the opportunities, challenges and characteristics of different areas, and supports long-term economic growth both locally and nationally. Policy E4 in chapter 7 states 'the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas should be supported, including through facilities to support rural leisure and tourism and measures to retain and expand accessible local shops and services. Policy E4 adds that development proposals to meet business needs in rural areas may need to be located outside settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances:

- a. Development proposals should take opportunities, where they exist, to use previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing development; and
- b. The siting and design of development should be appropriate having regard to the character of its surroundings.

Further to the above, Policy S5 of the NPPF states that only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements and that these should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework. This includes development for rural businesses and services, including tourism, where a location outside settlements is shown to be necessary.

The applicant has noted that due to reducing demand of pods, the applicant seeks to diversify to create a more resilient revenue stream. In this regard, the proposal would see the replacement of three pitches for two static caravans, however, it would provide a service that the caravan and camping site does not presently provide. The addition of the static caravans would help an established rural business to modernise and is therefore considered acceptable.

Design and Visual Amenity

The proposed static caravans would be of a standard white appearance as is commonly found on caravan sites throughout the borough and country. The proposed caravans will not be overly large and of a size that is not too dissimilar to larger touring caravans, campervans or motorhomes that may occupy the pitches. The caravans would be visible fleetingly from the entrance and in between the boundary hedges, however, the caravans would be viewed within the context of the site as an established caravan and camping site.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed siting of the static caravans would not unduly impact on the rural character of the area. The proposal is considered to be acceptable and accord with policies, P1, P3, DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy, policy JP-P1 of the adopted PfE and the NPPF.

Ecology, Trees and Biodiversity

The area of land that the proposed static caravans would be sited on are existing pitches with no ecological value. The application does not propose any formalised gardens. The proposed development would meet the exception criteria set out of BNG.

The proposal is therefore acceptable and accords with policy the relevant policies within the adopted Core Strategy, adopted PfE and the NPPF.

Neighbour Amenity

There are two rows of terrace properties (217 to 225 Huddersfield Road and 227 to 231 Huddersfield Road) within close vicinity to the application site. The caravan and camping site wraps around the properties on three sides. The properties are set on considerably higher ground than the application site. The caravans would be sited approximately 32m from the nearest residential property. The siting of the caravans would not lead to overshadowing or an overbearing impact on the amenity of any of the neighbouring residential properties.

Furthermore, it is noted that the proposal would see three touring caravan pitches replaced with two static caravans, it would therefore lead to a reduction of potential caravans that could occupy the site at any one time. Additionally, it is noted that site is presently used as a caravan and camping site, and the use as holiday let would be restricted to the same as the rest of the site, therefore it would not lead to an intensification of the use and increase in noise or nuisance than is presently experienced.

The proposal therefore would not unduly impact on the amenity of any of the neighbouring properties and would accord with policies DM1 and G9 of the adopted Core Strategy, policy JP-P1 of the adopted PfE, SPD and NPPF.

Impact on Accessibility & Highway Safety

The site is located approximately 10-15 walk from Newhey Tram Station. The site is located outside the Defined Urban Area as defined by policy G/D/1 of the UDP. The proposal would see three touring pitches replaced by two static caravans. Therefore, reducing the capacity of the site and likely reducing the number of comings and goings. In particular, the static caravans would see the reduction of customers entering and leaving the site with attached caravans and larger vehicles such as campervans and motorhomes. The Council's highway department do not expect significant traffic generation from the proposal.

In regard to parking, although no specified parking is identified on the plans, it is noted that there is parking space in between the two static caravans and there is adequate space for vehicles to park within the rest of the site. Overall, the Council's highway department have raised no concerns in regard to the proposal and therefore have raised no objection to the proposal.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in regard to accessibility and highway safety and would accord with the relevant policies within the adopted Core Strategy, adopted PfE and the NPPF.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (4)

- 1 The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason. Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and documents hereby approved:

- 1:1250 Location Plan. Drawing number: (60)-001
- Existing Site Plan. Drawing number: HC-25611-(60)-002
- Proposed Site Plan. Drawing number: HC-25611-(60)-002
- Existing and Proposed Section. Drawing number: HC-25611-(60)-005
- Static Caravan Floor Plan and Elevations. Drawing number: HC-25611-(60)-004

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 The caravans hereby approved shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and none shall be occupied between the last day of October and the first day in March the following year unless first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure that the approved holiday caravan accommodation is retained for use holiday purposes, protect the amenities of residents and protect the openness of the Green Belt, and in accordance with policies DM1 and G9 of the adopted Core Strategy, policies JP-G9 and JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 4 Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, the static holiday caravans hereby approved shall not be used until full details and specifications of the caravans has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and to protect the openness of the Green Belt, and in accordance with Policies P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, policy JP-P1 and JP-G9 and of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Approval Reason(s) (1)

- 1 The proposal complies with the development plan and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. It therefore comprises sustainable development and the Local Planning Authority worked proactively to issue the decision without delay.