

TWC/2016/0159

Land adjacent Caravan Site, Lodge Road, Donnington Wood, Telford, Shropshire
Change of use of grazing land to a gypsy and traveller site including access roads, provision of 1no. toilet block and associated landscaping

APPLICANT

Telford & Wrekin Council

RECEIVED

19/02/2016

PARISH

Donnington and Muxton

WARD

Muxton

OFFICER Daniel Owen

This application is before Members because the Council is the applicant.

OBJECTIONS RECEIVED: Yes.

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This is a full planning application for the change of use of the site from grazing land to a Gypsy and Traveller site with a toilet block, access road and landscaping. The access road would be taken directly from Lodge Lane to the south east of the site.
- 1.2 The site would provide 11 pitches, each of which has the potential to accommodate two caravans and two cars. A toilet block would be provided towards the rear of the site that has been converted from a steel shipping container. The pitches would be created on crushed stone and would be enclosed by a 2.1 metre high palisade fence that would run around the edge of the pitches and along the edges of the access road. No other permanent structures would be present on the site.
- 1.3 Planning permission was granted in December 2015 (TWC/2015/0830) for a change of use of the land to a gypsy and traveller transit site to replace a temporary site at Holyhead Road, Snedshill. A restriction was placed on that permission limiting the amount of time that a family could occupy a particular pitch to a maximum of 28 days. This application essentially proposes to lift that restriction to allow for the site to be used for permanent accommodation if necessary.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

- 2.1 The site is located to the north east of the built up area of Telford, to the east of Wrockwardine Wood and the south of Donnington Wood. It is located off Granville Road in Donnington to the north of an industrial unit, to the east of Asda supermarket and adjacent to the recently extended permanent Gypsy and Traveller site which provides pitches and facilities for permanent residents.
- 2.2 There are no residential dwellings adjacent to the site, with the closest houses being situated approximately 250 metres away on the opposite side of Donnington Wood Way. Lodge Road is a public highway that is used to access the Shropshire Golf Centre and the Telford Equestrian Centre. The Granville Local Nature Reserve is located to the north east of the site.

2.3 A public right of way runs along the south west boundary of the site linking Lodge Road to Donnington Wood Way. There is an existing landscaped bund to the south east of the site.

2.4 The site is designated for Employment Development in the saved Wrekin Local Plan.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

3.1 Planning Applications:

- TWC/2015/0830: Change of use of grazing land to a gypsy and traveller site including access roads, provision of 1no. toilet block and landscaping. Granted: 22/12/2015.

Adjacent Site:

- TWC/2013/0936: Extension and refurbishment of traveller and gypsy caravan site including the erection of 25no. single storey utility pods, 17no. pitches, community building, substation and associated roads and works on land off Lodge Road, Telford. Granted: 26/02/2014.

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT:

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) – the NPPF is not the development plan for Telford and Wrekin but it is a material consideration in this case because all of the borough's development plan policies have to be viewed in the light of this more recent national guidance.

4.2 Planning policy for traveller sites

- Published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in August 2015.

4.3 Core Strategy policies

- CS3: Telford
- CS15: Urban Design

4.4 Saved Wrekin Local Plan policies

- UD2: Design Criteria
- T22: Planning Obligations

4.5 Telford & Wrekin Local Plan

- HO9: Gypsy and Traveller developments

5. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

Standard consultation responses

5.1 Donnington and Muxton Parish Council: No objection but request that as much of the hedgerow as possible is maintained.

- 5.2 Shropshire Fire Service: No objection.
- 5.3 The Coal Authority: No objection subject to condition.
- 5.4 West Mercia Police: No objection. A request has been made to attach a condition requiring the applicant to aim to achieve the Secured by Design award status for the development.
- 5.5 Telford & Wrekin Local Access Forum: It should be explained how the footpath that runs adjacent to the site would be retained and protected and it should be given status.
- 5.6 Environmental Services (Arboricultural): No objection subject to condition.
- 5.7 Environmental Services (Drainage): No objection subject to condition.
- 5.8 Environmental Services (Highways): No objection subject to conditions.
- 5.9 Affordable Housing: A recent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) for Telford & Wrekin (November 2014) identified a requirement for additional provision for Gypsies and Travellers. This included further permanent site accommodation and the need to replace the existing transit site when the temporary planning consent for this expires in late 2015. The GTAA stated that there was a need for at least eleven transit pitches in Telford & Wrekin, together with a plan to manage larger encampments from time to time.
- 5.10 Ecology: No objection subject to conditions.
- 5.11 Planning Policy: No objection.

5.2 Neighbour consultation responses

Letters were sent to the occupiers of thirty three neighbouring properties. In response four letters of objection have been received raising the following issues:

- The existing site is large enough,
- Environmental and visual impact.

The letters also refer to several matters, including cuts to public services that are not material planning considerations.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:

- 6.1 Having regard to the development plan policies and other material planning considerations, including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- The principal of the development / need;
- The design and layout of the proposal;
- The impact on neighbours;

- Highway matters;
- Other matters

The principal of the development / need

- 6.2 As stated above planning permission has recently been granted for the use of the land as a transit gypsy and traveller site. This application is for the same land use with the only difference between the proposals being that this application would also allow for the permanent use of the site if required.
- 6.3 The NPPF encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed. The application site consists of an area of land that is currently green in appearance and is used for grazing but has been developed in the past and this site, along with the wider area, is affected by a legacy of coalmining use.
- 6.4 The site is within the built up boundary of Telford as defined in the Wrekin Local Plan. Core Strategy Policy CS3 (Telford) states that Telford will be the focus for the Borough's development and that it will accommodate the majority of new homes, jobs and services.
- 6.5 The Council is required to address the requirements of national planning guidance on traveller site provision. Current evidence (set out in the Gypsy and Travellers Availability Assessment 2014) suggests the need for 32 additional pitches in the borough up to 2031. Some of this need has already been met, but additional pitches are required. The provision of additional pitches will also contribute towards reducing the likelihood of unauthorized encampments, which cause problems for local residents and businesses, as well as meeting identified needs.
- 6.6 The Telford & Wrekin Local Plan will address this deficiency and although this is not yet part of the development plan it is a material planning consideration that should be given weight. It should be also noted that the 2014 GTTA Needs Assessment will provide the evidence base that will be used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan and that assessment has identified a need for a permanent transit site within the Borough.
- 6.7 The site is currently designated for Employment Development in the saved Wrekin Local Plan. The application is a departure in this regard as the proposal is not for a recognised employment use. Saved Policy E9 does allow for the development of non-employment uses in such areas. The criteria against which proposals need to be assessed relate to whether the proposal would adversely affect the supply of employment land, whether it would be in keeping with the environmental, retail, leisure and transport policies of the plan and if there is a demonstrable need for the proposal in that area.
- 6.8 The application site covers a small area of a much wider employment land allocation and it is not considered that it would result in an adverse effect on the supply of employment land within the Borough. The proposal would not conflict with any

environmental, retail, leisure or transport policies within the development plan and as stated above the 2014 GTAA Needs Assessment has identified a need for a transit facility within the borough. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in this regard despite being a departure from the development plan.

- 6.9 As stated above, the site is located on the edge of the current development boundary of Telford urban area. Nonetheless, the site is situated in a location that provides relatively easy access to a range of local facilities and services, including a supermarket and leisure facilities, as well as easy access to the wider countryside for recreation.
- 6.10 Furthermore, the development of this site would act, in effect, as an extension to the existing pitches provided at the Lodge road site. The development would result in the loss of a relatively small parcel of open land. However the development would assist in the managed provision of additional pitches, whilst relieving pressure for unauthorised encampments elsewhere leading to incurred costs of clearing the site.

The design and layout of the proposals

- 6.11 Policy UD2 of the Wrekin Local Plan relates to design criteria and states that development proposals need to be of an appropriate design quality and relate positively to their context. The DCLG Planning policy for traveller sites provides specific criteria that should be taken into account when considering such applications. This includes ensuring the effective use of previously developed land, sites being well planned or soft landscaped, promoting opportunities for healthy lifestyles and not enclosing sites with so much hard landscaping that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community.
- 6.12 The application site is previously developed land despite its current appearance. The internal boundary of the site will be fenced and a landscaped bund, approximately 9 metres wide would be provided between the fence and the wider area. There is also a well landscaped buffer to the lodge road end of the site and along the existing public footpath which would be retained. The visual impact of the site on the wider area would be minimal. It is considered that the proposed site layout and design would be acceptable when assessed against the DCLG policy, the Core Strategy and the Wrekin Local Plan.

The impact on neighbours

- 6.13 There would be a high degree of landscaping between the proposed site and the existing permanent Gypsy and Traveller site on the land to the south west and the proposal would not directly impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of that site. The closest houses are approximately 250 metres away to the north in Eastwood Drive which is on the opposite side of Donnington Wood Way. Given the separation distance the proposal would not directly impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of those houses.

- 6.14 The objections received make reference to the potential for the development to have a negative impact on neighbouring businesses due to the connotations that the use has with crime and anti-social behaviour. No information has been provided to suggest that the extended Gypsy and Traveller site to the south west has resulted in any increase in crime or anti-social behaviour. The pitches will be set well back from the edge of the site and would be well screened by the existing bund and landscaping when viewed from the employment uses to the south. It is not considered that there would be a detrimental impact on those businesses as a result of the development.

Highway matters

- 6.15 As with the recently approved application this proposal includes a new access that would link the site to Lodge Road. A gate would be erected at the site entrance to ensure that the site cannot be accessed without consent. The proposal would result in a limited number of vehicular trips to and from the site and the application has been considered by the Council's Highways Engineers who have raised no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure that an adequate visibility splay is provided and in relation to the construction and laying out of the access and parking areas. Subject to the requested conditions there are no objections to the proposal with regard to highway safety.

Other matters

- 6.16 Reference has been made in one of the letters of objection to the loss of part of the Granville Country Park. The application site does not form part of the Granville Country Park which is located approximately 600 metres away.
- 6.17 The proposal has been supported by a preliminary Ecological Appraisal and has been considered by the Council's Ecologist. The development would result in the loss of approximately 0.6 ha of habitats, predominantly poor semi-improved grassland, with smaller areas of species poor scrub and hedgerow and the loss of these habitats is not considered to be ecologically significant. Subject to the imposition of conditions ensuring that a pre-commencement badger inspection of the site is undertaken and that further details of the proposed landscaping and lighting for the site and submitted the Council's Ecology officer not raised any objection to the proposal.
- 6.18 The site falls within the defined coal mining Development High Risk Area. A Statement for Planning for Lodge Road Earthworks has been submitted in support of the application and that has been considered by the Coal Authority. No objection is raised to the proposal by the Coal Authority subject to the implementation of a scheme to prevent vehicular access or the siting of any caravan or other structure within the zone of influence of the two mine entries until further information is submitted. This can be controlled through a suitably worded planning condition.
- 6.19 West Mercia police has requested that a condition is attached in relation to secure by design. The criteria referred to in the consultation response relate to windows in

blank elevations, remote car parking areas, lighting on the door of each property, maintenance of open space, permeability through the site and dwelling boundaries. Given that the site would be occupied by caravans rather than fixed dwellings it is not considered necessary to attach conditions relating to the matters raised. This matter was not conditioned on the previously approved scheme and it is not considered necessary in this instance.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed development is located within a sustainable location and is acceptable in principle. It is considered that the scale and design of the site accords with national guidance for gypsy and traveller sites and the site would be well screened from adjacent land uses to ensure no conflict or adverse impact. The new road in to the site is acceptable and there will be no adverse impact on highway safety. Ground conditions, impacts on trees and ecology can all be mitigated and controlled through appropriate conditions

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation to the Planning Committee on this application is that PLANNING PERMISSION IS GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. Time limit
2. Site shall be occupied by gypsies and travellers
3. Development in accordance with plan Nos.
4. No vehicles over 3.5 tonnes
5. No commercial or industrial activities
6. Details of foul and surface drainage
7. Highways – parking and turning
8. Highways – visibility splays
9. Highways – surface of access drive
10. Ecology – Badger inspection
11. Ecology – external lighting
12. Landscaping to be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans

Informatives

1. Conditions
2. Highways
3. Ecology – removal and disposal of Japanese rose
4. Ecology – nesting wild birds
5. Fire Safety
6. Coal Authority