

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** **1<sup>st</sup> MAY 2019**

**REPORT BY:** **CHIEF OFFICER (PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT  
AND ECONOMY)**

**SUBJECT:** **FULL APPLICATION – EXTENSION TO EXISTING  
TOURING CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITE TO  
PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TOURIST  
ACCOMMODATION AND ASSOCIATED  
LANDSCAPING AND INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE  
RIDINGS, THE VILLAGE, BABELL.**

**APPLICATION  
NUMBER:** **059217**

**APPLICANT:** **MR & MRS B PARRY**

**SITE:** **THE RIDINGS, BABELL**

**APPLICATION  
VALID DATE:** **15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2018**

**LOCAL MEMBERS:** **COUNCILLOR T JONES**

**TOWN/COMMUNITY  
COUNCIL:** **YSCEIFIOG COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**REASON FOR  
COMMITTEE:** **MEMBER REQUEST – DUE TO THE SCALE AND  
IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL**

**SITE VISIT:** **YES**

**1.00 SUMMARY**

- 1.01 This is a full planning application for the extension of an existing caravan and camping site on land at The Ridings, Babel. The proposal would allow for an increase of 3 no. touring pitches, the addition of 5 no. new holiday chalets, replacement amenity building with associated landscaping works and infrastructure.

**2.00 RECOMMENDATION: TO GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:-**

2.01 That conditional planning permission be granted subject to:

Conditions

1. Time Commencement
2. In accordance with approved plans
3. Permission relates to the use of the site for 18 touring caravans/ motor homes and associated vehicles and for 5 chalets for holiday purposes only
4. Chalets for holiday letting purposes only and shall not be occupied by any family, group or individual for more than three months (cumulative) in any one calendar year
5. Occupancy of the touring caravan pitches shall be restricted to the period from 14<sup>th</sup> February to the 14<sup>th</sup> January in the following calendar year
6. There shall be no winter storage of any touring caravans or any other static vans other than those illustrated on the Amended Site Layout DWG no. 18-PL-003 Rev.F
7. Approval of materials and finish colours for Amenity Building
8. Details of hard landscaping to be submitted and approved (hard and paved surfacing)
9. Implementation of soft landscaping Scheme
10. Development in accordance with the Ecological Appraisal recommendations and Badger Method Statement
11. No development within 30m of the Badger Sett unless a Method Statement has been submitted and approved, detail to be in line with the requirements for an NRW licence
12. A forward visibility sightline of 70m shall be provided for vehicles waiting to turn right into the site
13. No part of the proposed walls or footway in the vicinity of the access shall encroach onto the adopted highway
14. The proposed exit shall have a visibility sightline of 2.4m x 43m in a northerly direction within which there should be no obstruction
15. Facilities for parking, turning loading and unloading
16. Positive means to prevent surface water run-off onto the highway
17. Scheme for external lighting to be submitted and approved.

**3.00 CONSULTATIONS**

3.01 Local Member

Councillor T Jones

Requests the application be determined at Planning Committee, and that a site visit is undertaken for the following reason(s):

- Scale of the development
- Concern regarding the impact upon neighbouring land uses

- Level of opposition received

Councillor C Dolphin

Acting on behalf of the Local Member due to a prejudicial interest and as advised by the Monitoring Officer, it is requested that the application is determined at Planning Committee to include a site visit.

The following concerns are noted:

- Scale of the development
- Concern regarding the impact upon neighbouring land uses
- Variety of tourist accommodation proposed

Ysceifiog Community Council

Objects to the application raising the following concerns:

- The current number of camping and static caravans on the site do not appear to have planning consent. An investigation should be undertaken by the Planning Authority to determine what current camping and caravan pitches have formal consent.
- The existing poultry farm is adjacent to the boundary of the proposed development site. Consideration should be given to the impact of providing accommodation units so close to the poultry buildings would have on health and wellbeing on residents using the park facilities and accommodation.
- Currently there is a high voltage overhead power line crossing part of the site. Concerns have been raised as to a minimum safe distance any holiday units should be located adjacent to this power line. The Community Council is informed that this should be a minimum of 20 metres.
- The existing entranceway provides very poor visibility for traffic entering or exiting the site. The highway adjacent to the site has no pedestrian footways and increased traffic volumes and movements will need to be catered for in a safe manor by improvements to the highway. In addition, currently there is no public transport service being provided to this community.
- A seasonal time limit for the use of the site should be determined and made a condition of the planning consent.
- The Community Council has been made aware that there is currently a badger sett in the hedgerow boundary of the development site. An impact assessment should be undertaken and a plan to mitigate any disturbance that may be caused.
- The application shows a water treatment plant to be installed. The land adjacent to the plant location is a lower ground level and is not in the ownership of the applicant. What measures are being put in place to ensure no land contamination is incurred to the adjacent land.
- The Community Council considers the application to be over development of the current site having significant impact on the open countryside and adjacent dwellings, and does not

conform to the Planning Authority Policy for this type of development.

- The Community Council requests that the Planning Application is put before Full Planning Committee and that a site visit is undertaken by Planning Committee Members.

#### Head of Assets and Transportation

No objection subject to conditions:

- Facilities for parking, turning loading and unloading
- Positive means to prevent surface water run-off onto highway
- Forward visibility sightline of 70m to be provided (right turn vehicles)
- No part of the proposed walls or footway shall encroach onto the adopted highway
- Proposed exit shall have a visibility sightline of 2.4m x 43m in a northerly direction within which there should be no obstruction

#### Head of Public Protection

No adverse comments to make, however, the Applicant is reminded that a Caravan Site Licence will be required in order to operate the site.

#### Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru

Welsh Water have assessed the proposal and note the developer proposes to dispose of foul flows via a private treatment works. Welsh Water raises no objection, however advises the applicant to contact NRW who may have an input in the regulation of this method of drainage disposal.

#### Natural Resources Wales

No objections subject to the imposition of conditions which ensure compliance with the recommendations of the Ecological Appraisal and NRW licence requirements for works within 30m of an active badger sett is submitted, and the submission of an appropriate external lighting plan.

NRW advises that the proposed method of drainage disposal will necessitate the need for an environmental permit.

## **4.00 PUBLICITY**

### **4.01 Press Notice, Site, Notice, Neighbour Notification**

At the time of writing, 19no. Letters of objection have been received from third parties in response to the consultation exercise in respect of the proposals. These responses raise objection upon the following grounds:

- Result in an excessive increase in touring caravans which is an overdevelopment of the site
- More than 10% increase contrary to policy T6
- Increase in the usage of internet which already has a slow connection
- The local highway network is inadequate to accommodate the increase in traffic
- Increase in the number of vehicles towing caravans within the vicinity of the site and through the village
- The local highway network does not have any pavements or street lighting
- The site is not serviced by public transport therefore increasing the dependency on the private car
- The increase in traffic will impact other vulnerable road uses such as pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.
- Impact on the operation of neighbouring land uses
- Increase in noise and light pollution
- The proposed development will have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents
- There are already enough caravan and camping sites in the local area
- The local economy will not benefit from the increase in tourist accommodation
- The adjacent chicken farm presents a biohazard and health issues for occupants of the site
- Not in keeping with the character of the area
- High voltage powerlines cross the site
- Impact on the existing Badger sett
- There is no evidence need for more caravans
- The Black Lion Public House is closed

## **5.00 SITE HISTORY**

5.01 054953 Application for the approval of details reserved by condition no.s 5 (highway boundary) and 7 (hedgerow) attached to planning permission ref: 053414 – Approved 23.02.16

053414 Use of existing certificated touring caravan site as a touring caravan site for up to 15 touring caravans, including amenity blocks, retention of touring caravan storage area – Approved 20.01.16

047103 Construction of an equestrian manege with two floodlights for private use- Approved 08.04.10

045955 Installation of a waste holding tank suitable for storage of chemical toilet for 5 touring caravans – Approved 10.03.09

## **6.00 PLANNING POLICIES**

### **6.01 Flintshire Unitary Development Plan**

STR1 New Development

STR6 Tourism

STR7 Natural Environment

GEN1 General Requirements for Development

GEN3 Development in the Open Countryside

D1 Design Quality, Location and Layout

D3 Landscaping

TWH1 Development Affecting Trees and Woodlands

L1 Landscape Character

WB1 Species Protection

AC13 Access and Traffic Impact

AC18 Parking Provision and New Development

T4 New Static Caravans and Chalet Holiday Sites

T6 Touring Caravan Sites

T7 Tent Camping Sites

T8 Holiday Occupancy Conditions

EWP12 Pollution

EWP13 Nuisance

SPGN no. 8 Nature Conservation and Development

SPGN no. 11 Parking Standards

### **Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (December 2018)**

TAN 13 Tourism

## **7.00 PLANNING APPRAISAL**

### **7.01 Introduction**

This is a full planning application for the extension of an existing caravan and camping site on land at The Ridings, Babel. The proposal would allow for an increase of 3 no. touring pitches, the addition of 5 no. new holiday chalets, replacement amenity building with associated landscaping works and infrastructure.

### **7.02 Site Description**

The Ridings is a small holding which extends for 1.61ha (4 acres). The Ridings also operates an established caravan and camping site, located on the outskirts of Babel. The application site excluding the dwelling house and associated curtilage extends for 1.16 ha and comprises the existing touring caravan site, winter storage area, the riding arena to the east and the paddocks to the north of the dwelling. The application site lies outside the recognised settlement boundary and as such in an area of open countryside.

7.03 The Ridings comprises a well maintained single storey property of four double bedrooms served by its own access off the adjacent highway. Externally there are a range of outbuildings which include a

static caravan, garages, workshop, small carport, chicken shed and a stable block of four loose boxes, tack and feed store.

- 7.04 The caravan and camping area comprises a relatively flat field which slopes gently to the south. The existing site is situated to the south of the property and is bound by a mixture of hedging, wooden fencing and mature trees. The site is licenced for 15 touring caravans, with electric hook ups provided for 8 caravans. The caravan and camping area has a separate entrance to the site off the adjacent highway. The southern part of this area is used for winter storage for 12 touring caravans. A mobile unit provides Ladies and Gentlemen's WC / shower and external washing up area.
- 7.05 To the east of the property lies a floodlit riding area measuring 20m x 40m and has a sand and rubber surface and is bound with kick board and wooden post and rail fencing around the perimeter.
- 7.06 The paddocks to the north envelope around the holding, and have in the past been used for equestrian purposes and are bound by mature hedging and semi mature trees.
- 7.07 Proposed Development  
This is a full planning application for the extension of an existing caravan and camping site to provide an additional 3 no. touring pitches, increasing the existing capacity to 18 no. seasonal pitches, whilst retaining the existing area for winter storage. The proposal also includes the introduction of 5 no. holiday chalets to the north paddock along with associated landscape works and infrastructure.
- 7.08 In order to facilitate the proposed scheme, the existing outbuildings, amenity building and riding arena will be removed and replaced with soft landscaped areas, additional parking bays (6) to include a disabled space, replacement amenity building with refuse disposal area to serve the site and a children's equipped play area.
- 7.09 The access into the site will take advantage of the two existing access points from the adjacent highway. The northerly access which currently serves the dwelling will be improved in order to provide the necessary visibility splays. This access will become the main entrance to the site with an internal track circulating through the site to serve the premise. This route will be operated on a one way system exiting from the existing access to the south of the site which currently serves the touring site.
- 7.10 Principle of Development  
This application relates to a proposal that combines both an extension to an existing caravan touring site and the addition of holiday chalets. Therefore policy T4 and T6 are of most relevance. With respect to the UDP policies as stated above, the criteria for both policies is fundamentally the same, with the exception to two additional points

in T6 specifically relating to touring sites. For the purposes of assessing the proposal, the criteria of both policies will be considered at length with the specific points set out in policy T6 included. These will be addressed in turn below:

- 7.11 a) *The proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents, other users of nearby land/property or the community in general:*

The closest neighbouring residential property to the site is Merllyn Bach, an established poultry farm unit. The north field proposed for the 5 holiday chalets would share its eastern boundary with Merllyn Bach; the site layout illustrates that this area which backs onto the party boundary is clear of development albeit with the exception of the turning head and access track which will serve the site. With reference to my site visit and the site layout, there is an existing hedgerow which serves as the party boundary, this combined with the additional planting proposed would provide additional screening, therefore reducing any adverse impacts upon the amenity in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy.

Both The Ridings together with the Touring Site and the Poultry Unit at Merllyn Bach are all existing land uses which have operated without compromising the other. I therefore do not envisage the proposed extension and addition of further tourist accommodation at The Ridings to cause undue impact towards the operations of the poultry unit or vice versa.

Consideration is given to the proposed use and the resultant noise that would be generated, as such the Local Planning Authority cannot impose a reasonable condition that could control this. Instead the site would need to operate in accordance with the Statutory Noise Regulations and in accordance with any licence issued following the grant of permission.

- 7.12 b) *The scale of the proposal, together with the number, siting and layout of pitches and circulation roads is appropriate to the characteristics of the site and locality;*

- *Any increase in the number of pitches is marginal*
- *Any physical extension of the site is modest:*

The site benefits from an existing planning permission ref 053414 which allows the use of the western field as a touring caravan site and provides 15 pitches, including amenity blocks and use of the field to the east for the winter storage of touring caravans. This was a partly retrospective permission for the retention of the amenity blocks and the storage of the touring caravans, presumably from the site's subsequent success. The site has therefore grown to reflect the demand, regularising the site as a touring caravan site and providing

an additional 10 pitches to the initial 5. In addition to the touring site, provision has been made for the winter storage for up to 12 tourers.

The proposed scheme would involve a modest extension, to include additional land, encompassing the holding to facilitate a new land use arrangement. The scheme would result in a total of 18 touring caravan pitches being provided on site, along with the addition of 5 new holiday chalets to the north paddock. Whilst in terms of scale/numbers, the proposal would amount to an increase of approximately 53%, I am mindful that the proposal is to include the holding as a whole which also comprises the introduction of 5 holiday chalets. This is a new element to The Ridings, which is considered to be a reasonable means of offering alternative holiday accommodation aimed at the visitor.

I note the objections received which raise concerns of the scale and growth of the site, and in terms of the existing touring pitches, the increase equates to 20%. I accept that this exceeds the 10% stated in the commentary of policy T6, however the addition of 3 touring pitches is considered to be marginal. Policy T6 continues to state that any increase is dependent upon the ability of the site to accommodate the extension and the suitability of utilising existing boundaries, screening and reinforcing this with appropriate landscaping. To address the extension to the existing touring site and the introduction of holiday chalets, the site is already well screened on all of its boundaries, however, it is proposed to provide further supplementary planting in these areas, which will only serve to reinforce these boundaries and therefore reduce the overall impact of the scheme.

The existing touring site would allow the number of pitches to increase by an additional 3, whilst the paddock to the north will accommodate 5 new holiday chalets. It would appear that the proposed overall site has the capacity to comfortably accommodate the proposed number of pitches/holiday accommodation in accordance with regulatory standards. The increase is therefore considered to be acceptable.

I am equally mindful that the tourism sector is extremely important to the economy in Flintshire, especially in the northern parts of the County. With reference to the planning history, the principle of the site providing tourist accommodation has been established. Therefore the introduction of additional caravan pitches and other means of tourist accommodation would both contribute to the growth of the existing business and the wider economy.

- 7.13 c) *The proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on features or areas of landscape, nature conservation or historic features;*

The site is located in open countryside, which is not subject to any

form of designation. There are also no protected historic or landscape features or listed buildings on or in proximity that would otherwise require consideration in respect of the proposal.

Whilst the site is predominantly improved agricultural grassland which is otherwise not considered to be of high ecological value, the existing hedgerows which serve as the boundaries to the site have potential for nesting birds and foraging bats.

The application is supported by an Ecological Appraisal undertaken by PJ Ecological Solutions dated July 2018. The study confirms that the proposed project would result in the loss of small areas of improved grassland, the removal of two trees and the removal of a section of a species poor hedgerow which divides the touring site with the north paddock proposed for the holiday chalets. All boundary hedgerows are to be retained and reinforced with further planting as a means of encouraging ecological enhancements. The internal loss of these small areas are considered to be of relatively low ecological value, however further supplementary landscaping will provide compensation to the loss experienced.

The study confirms that the outbuildings proposed for demolition to facilitate the scheme do not currently contain bat roosts and therefore adverse impacts to roosting bats from the proposed development works are unlikely. The study also confirms that there is a subsidiary badger sett located within the hedgerow boundary to the south of the existing touring site; for which works associated with the proposed scheme are intended within 30m of the identified sett. As such a Badger Licence will be required from Natural Resource Wales in order to undertake the proposed works within this buffer zone. Nevertheless, the Ecological Appraisal proposes appropriate mitigation measures which will ensure that there are no long term effects of the development upon the badgers in this locality.

The existing hedgerows upon the boundaries of the site will be retained and therefore there will be no detrimental impact upon these habitats for bats, badgers or breeding birds. I therefore propose the imposition of conditions which ensures the development accords with the recommendations made in the supporting Ecological Appraisal and that a Badger Method Statement is submitted and approved for a scheme for working within the 30m buffer zone.

7.14 d) *The scheme incorporates substantial internal and structural landscaping:*

The site has established hedgerow boundaries to all boundaries and additional boundary planting is proposed. Towards the eastern boundary, in the proposed position of the amenity block, new internal site planting is proposed to help to soften the impact of this structure. During consideration of the application, regard has been had to the

character of the landscape in this location. In recognisance to the visual character of field patterns in the locality, it was considered that the introduction of areas of planting and landscaping within the site boundaries would unacceptably alter the character of the site, in particular to the touring caravan field.

I am mindful of ensuring that this part of the site retains the appearance of a field when not in use as a caravan site. The introduction of additional internal landscaping and planting would, I consider, result in a somewhat manicured appearance which would not accord with the surrounding landscape. For this reason, landscaping is restricted to a scheme of supplementary planting to site boundaries. As such, the proposed landscaping is considered to be acceptable.

- 7.15 e) *It is in close proximity to and can be easily accessed from the local highway network;*

The Ridings is accessed off the North Wales trunk road from the north by the A55 (Chester to Holyhead) and to the south by the A541 (Mold to Denbigh).

The access into the site will take advantage of the two existing access points onto the highway. The north access to The Ridings will be altered to form the main entrance with a circulation track into the touring caravan area, which will be designated as a one way system and will provide access to the remaining parts of the site, exiting from the south access.

Concerns have been raised by third parties in respect of the adequacy of the existing local highway infrastructure to accommodate the traffic arising from the proposals. I am advised by the Highway Authority that, subject to the imposition of conditions, the proposal is acceptable.

- 7.16 f) *It is used for touring caravan purposes and any touring caravans are removed from the site for periods when not in use;*

I propose to condition that caravans are only present upon the site when in holiday use, that there is no seasonal storage and that there is no additional storage over the winter period. In order to maintain consistency with the occupancy restrictions imposed upon the present caravan site, it is proposed that the site would operate from 14<sup>th</sup> January in one year to 14<sup>th</sup> February in the following year.

The holiday chalets would also be subject to a similarly worded condition which would seek to control the occupancy of the units for the purposes of holiday accommodation and therefore preventing the use of the units as permanent residential accommodation, which would otherwise be restricted in such locations of open countryside.

- 7.17 g) *Any essential service buildings that are needed can be provided within existing buildings or appropriately sited and designed small new buildings.*

The proposal includes the provision of a service building which would provide toilets, showers, disabled facilities, vegetable preparation areas, and a dish wash and drying area. The proposed building would cover an area of 96m<sup>2</sup>, is domestic in scale, single storey in height and proposes the use of a palette of naturally occurring materials that will allow the building to assimilate to its surroundings in time.

The scale of the building and its proposed floor area is not dissimilar to the existing building it proposes to replace. The building would form a fundamental part to the proposed scheme providing essential facilities/amenity in accordance with the regulatory body. In addition, appropriate facilities for recycling and refuse disposal are also provided and sited appropriately.

#### Landscape Impact

- 7.18 The scale and layout of the proposal has been designed to minimise the impact on residential amenity and the impact on the landscape. The previous planning permission ref 053414 permitted the touring pitches to be slabbed with surrounding grassed areas and reinforced planting to the boundaries. Having visited the site during the close season, the existing hard surfacing is considered to possess a low profile to the topography and remains inconspicuous. The touring pitches will therefore be retained as such with the additional 3 pitches following suit. Any visual impacts of the development would therefore be limited to within the operating season and the site would have a 'green' appearance during the winter months.

- 7.19 The site undulates to the east, however is generally flat in nature, the amenity building, chalets and pitches are sited so as to maximise the screening benefit of the existing site boundaries in order that the impacts of the proposals upon any views of the site would be minimised. The site layout seeks to mitigate the impact on the landscape and to enhance the natural hedgerow features of the site through further planting.

#### Other Matters

- 7.20 During the course of the application a planning enforcement complaint was received raising concerns that the applicant had begun implementing the application currently under consideration. The complaint was investigated in accordance with Flintshire's Planning Enforcement Policy with a site visit undertaken. The investigating officer noted that ground works had been carried out, which included the removal of top soil and releveling works.

- 7.21 With reference to the planning history, an extant planning permission exists on the site that has been subject to the ground works. The relevant ref is 053414 which was approved on the 20/01/16. The permission includes the use of the site as a touring caravan site for up to 15 touring pitches and retention of winter touring caravan storage. Whilst the use of the site has been in accordance with the permission, the approved works to include the cement wheel bases for the touring pitches and crushed stone track had not been implemented in full. The site has therefore remained a grassed area since this approval was issued.
- 7.22 It was therefore concluded that the works undertaken were within the scope of the extant permission. Whilst the application currently under consideration includes this area within the redline, It was not considered that the works had progressed to the extent that the Local Planning Authority could reasonably argue that the proposed scheme was being implemented prior to consent being issued.
- 7.23 As such, it was not considered that the works undertaken had progressed to an extent beyond the approved permission 053414 or that it was evident that a breach of planning control had occurred.
- 7.24 Further matters have been raised by third parties with regard to increase in internet use adversely affecting current network capacity, proximity to the overhead cable, and that the local pub had closed. In relation to the proposed use these matters do not attract enough weight in the overall planning balance to necessitate a recommendation of refusal. With regards to the potential or alleged contamination of ground water and the potential biohazard of the poultry farm there is no evidence to substantiate these matters.

## **8.00 CONCLUSION**

It is considered that the proposed development of an existing caravan touring site is in an appropriate location close to the local highway network and within accessibility of existing services upon both the site and within the surrounding locality. Whilst the site is in the open countryside, the proposed landscaping and surface materials would reduce the impact on the landscape. The proposal complies with the relevant development plan policies for this type of development.

I therefore recommend that planning permission is granted subject to the conditions as set out within paragraph 2.01 of this report.

## 8.01 Other Considerations

The Council has had due regard to its duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable increase in crime and disorder as a result of the recommended decision.

The Council has acted in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 including Article 8 of the Convention and in a manner which is necessary in a democratic society in furtherance of the legitimate aims of the Act and the Convention.

The Council has had due regard to its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.

The Council has had due regard to its duty under Section 3 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of wellbeing objectives as a result of the recommended decision.

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Planning Application & Supporting Documents  
National & Local Planning Policy  
Responses to Consultation  
Responses to Publicity

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