

Planning Statement to support the siting of four static caravans and two touring caravans on an existing Gypsy and Traveller site.

Introduction

This statement is to accompany a full planning application for the approval of four static caravans and two touring caravans along with the conversion of an existing barn at Pine Hollow Barn, Stoke Lane, Higham on the Hill.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the application drawings and supporting documents. The following sections provides a description of the proposals, alongside an overview and assessment of the policy context which are relevant to the proposal. The statement demonstrates the compliance with both local and national policies and should be viewed favourable and approved without delay.

Site Context and surrounding area

The site comprises of a single parcel of land, situated to the west of Stoke Lane, Higham on the Hill. The site is enclosed along its eastern boundary by a closed boarded fence, with access positioned to the south of this eastern boundary. An existing brick and tiled barn is situated along this east facing edge. The defined settlement boundary of Higham is to the south of the site.

To the north and west of the site the site is bound by agricultural land, immediately to the south Public Right of Way T47/1 bounds the site and provides direct access to Higham on the Hill. On the opposite of the road to the east is Vale Farm, a Bed and Breakfast and associated outbuildings, as well as Elm Barn. Stoke Lane is an adopted classified road which and a bus stop is positioned immediately outside the site.

Relevant Planning History

08/00891/COU

Change of use of land to the keeping of horses and residential caravan site for one gypsy family with two caravans and formation of access

Permitted 3rd November 2008

Relevant Planning Policy

Policy

Core Strategy (2009):

- Policy 18: Provision of Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (SADMP) (2016):

- Policy DM1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy DM4: Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation
- Policy DM6: Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest
- Policy DM7: Preventing Pollution and Flooding
- Policy DM10: Development and Design

- Policy DM17: Highways and Transportation
- Policy DM18: Vehicle Parking Standards

National Planning Policies and Guidance:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2024)

Other Relevant Guidance:

- DCLG Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practise Guide
- Good Design Guide (2020)
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Study (2016)
- Leicestershire Highway Design Guide (2022)

Principle

The principle of a gypsy and traveller site has been established through the granting and implementation of an extant planning permission ref 08/00891/COU. This is relevant when having regard to the respective policies.

Policy 18 of the adopted Core Strategy sets out the criteria by which such proposals will be determined. This states that for new gypsy and travellers sites, they will be granted subject to meeting the following criteria:-

- Within or adjacent to the settlement boundary of Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton or
- Within or adjacent to the settlement boundary of any of the Key Rural Centres/Rural Villages or
- Is located within a reasonable distance of local services and facilities including shops, GP's, and schools, even if the site is not directly adjacent to the settlement boundary, and
- Has safe highway access, provision for parking and servicing
- Can be capable of sympathetic assimilation into the surroundings and
- Is appropriate to the scale of the nearest settlement, its local services and infrastructure
- Will not cause unacceptable nuisance to existing neighbours by virtue of noise and other disturbance caused by movement of vehicles to and from the site
- Appropriate to provide a safe and healthy environment for residents

Policy 18 of the Core Strategy is a positively worded policy, and does not require the applicant to demonstrate need. It should also be noted that Hinckley and Bosworth Council have not carried out an up to date Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, with the latest one dated 2016. Since this date the needs will have significantly altered. As such given this position planning permission should be granted, unless there are adverse impacts which significantly and demonstrable outweigh the benefits.

When taking each matter of Policy 18 of the Core Strategy in turn, regard should be had that the site already benefits from planning permission and this application simply seeks to provide

additional mobile homes for family members. Therefore by virtue of approving the initial scheme this would have assessed the proposal and its relationship to the nearest settlement of Higham on the Hill as being appropriate. Policy C of the Planning policy for travellers sites provides the suggestion that gypsy sites may be located in rural or semi-rural areas, providing that they are of scale and appropriate to their specific location.

Case law has established in such cases that “settlement” does not mean that it has to be designated as such in an adopted Local Plan, or that the settlement site must contain services. Case law has instead identified that being away from a settlement suggests a degree of remoteness and isolation for the purposes of Planning policy for traveller sites.

Nevertheless, the existing site, although situated outside the defined settlement boundary of Higham on the Hill is positioned in an established cluster of other residential uses. The site is well positioned with the existing public right of way situated to the south of the site providing an off road route into the settlement, as well as an established bus stop immediately adjacent to the sites access. It therefore can not be argued that the site is not located within reasonable distances of services, nor can it be argued it is positioned remote and isolated.

Impact on highways

Policy DM17 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan states that development proposals needs to demonstrate that there would be no significant adverse impact upon highway safety.

The proposal simply seeks to increase the number of existing pitches on site, and convert an existing barn to be used as a day room for the family on site. The existing access already provides a safe and suitable access from the Stoke Lane, with good visibility. Therefore, when considering highway safety, the existing site has been found to provide a safe and suitable access catering for the existing residents of the site. Therefore the fourth criteria of Policy 18 of the Core Strategy has been satisfied along with Policy DM17 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

Impact on the countryside.

Policy DM4 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan states that development in the countryside will be considered sustainable where it does not have a significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character, and landscape character of the countryside.

Policy DM10(c) of the SADMP states that developments will be permitted where they complement or enhance the character of the surrounding area with regard to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials and architectural features.

Policy C of the Planning policy for travellers sites provides the suggestion that gypsy sites may be located in rural or semi-rural areas, providing that they are of scale and appropriate to their specific location.

The application site is an established gypsy and traveller site, and this proposal simply seeks to increase the number of caravan pitches for associated family members. This would be limited to the provision four static caravans and two touring caravans, which can be easily accommodated on site as detailed within the site layout. The scheme does not seek to extend the boundaries into the wider countryside and therefore would not give rise to any

additional impact upon the countryside as it would be seen within the existing backdrop of the wider site.

The scheme also seeks to convert and extend an existing barn which resides on site, to provide a family day room. Policy DM4 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan considers sustainable development to include the change of use, re-use or extension of existing buildings which lead to the enhancement of the immediate setting. The extensions of the re-use of the existing barn to provide a day room facility which would accord with the aims of Policy DM4. The re-use of this barn would also avoid the erection of individual stand alone day rooms within the scheme, instead providing a solution through the sympathetic conversion of the existing brick built barn, which would be considered sustainable development and maintain the rural setting of the countryside.

Conclusion

When having regard to both National and Local Policies it is clear that planning permission should be granted for the siting of four static caravans and two touring caravans. The additional mobile homes would not give rise to any adverse impacts in terms of impact on the country or highways and as such permission should be granted without delay.