

Conservation Officer (Mr Paul Grundy) comments for: 23/00927/FUL

Proposal: Change of use of land from agricultural to sui generis (siting of caravans, motorhomes and tents on serviced hard standing and grass pitches) (Retrospective)

Site: Gatehouse Lodges, Cadeby Lane, Cadeby

Date Submitted: 29/11/2023

This is a proposal for the change of use of agricultural land to the north of Cadbey Lane and adjacent to the existing collection of buildings known as Gatehouse Lodges to sui generis use for the siting of caravans, motorhomes and tents on serviced hard standing pitches.

The application site is located close to the eastern boundary of the Market Bosworth Conservation Area and is considered to be within the setting of this designated heritage asset. The character of the eastern section of the conservation area is one of parkland associated with Bosworth Hall. Such historic character is considered to make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area. The character of the field within which the application site forms the northern section reflects its agricultural uses (both as pasture and grazing) rather than having a parkland character, however, the current character of the field as a whole, prior to the implementation of the unconsented development, is typical of the varied agricultural landscape that borders the Hall parkland so it sits comfortably within the parkland setting. Subsequently the site is considered make a negligible but positive contribution to the significance of the Market Bosworth Conservation Area.

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraphs 199-202 of the NPPF require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance, for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset to have clear and convincing justification, and for that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) DPD seek to protect and enhance the historic environment. Development proposals should ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

Planning permission has recently been granted for the erection of three timber lodges for holiday let purposes (ref 19/01308/FUL) on part of the application site but with an alternative access arrangements from Cadeby Lane over the field to the south of the site. The consented scheme was for a U-shaped plan development of timber lodges situated in the north-western corner of the field, as is part of the current proposal with motorhomes and caravans located in this position. The visual impact of the structures associated with the consented scheme were very much focused to this part of the application site, whilst the current proposal extends along the full width of the northern boundary of the field. It was considered that the character of the approved lodges would reflect the predominantly rural nature of the site and its setting, whilst in my opinion the caravans and motorhomes consisting the current proposal are considered incongruous features for the rural setting of the site and have an urbanising effect upon the area. In my opinion these visual effects appear limited to the vehicles only, with the hard surfacing installed to serve them being most noticeable on plan rather than being perceptible on the ground from the wider area including public vantage points along Cadeby Lane.

An existing mature band of trees along the western edge of the site would provide a screening effect to the proposed development when travelling eastwards along Cadeby Lane

when the vegetation is in full leaf. Additional deciduous trees and a quick thorn hedge have been planted along the southern boundary of the site, which once established would further increase the screening effect from various positions within the conservation area when observed along Cadeby Lane. The quick thorn hedge, in particular, is a native species that once established would provide a typical Midlands style field boundary so this natural feature will sit comfortably within the landscape. There will however be views of the motorhomes and caravans from Cadeby Lane through the vegetation at the times of the year when it is not in full leaf, and views over the southern boundary hedgerow will be available at all times due to the height of the proposed motorhomes and caravans.

In summary the proposal would cause some limited harm to the significance of the Market Bosworth Conservation Area resulting from the introduction of an incongruous and urbanising form of development within its immediate setting, with the adverse effects not avoided or fully mitigated by the existing and proposed vegetation. In my opinion the level of harm would be minor and less than substantial in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework. As currently proposed the harm caused to the Market Bosworth Conservation Area must be carefully weighed up against the public benefits of the proposal as required by Policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP DPD and paragraphs 199, 200 and 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the NPPF (paragraph 8). Public benefits may include heritage benefits as specified in the Planning Practice Guidance (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – paragraph 20), such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation

In my opinion the proposal can demonstrate no heritage benefits. Any non-heritage benefits should be identified by the decision taker and then weighed against the harm caused by the proposal as per paragraph 202 of the NPPF and Policy DM11 of the SADMP. In completing this balancing exercise great weight must be given to the conservation of the Market Bosworth Conservation Area as required by paragraph 199 of the NPPF. The ultimate conclusion of the balancing exercise, however, lies within the decision-taker and should the balancing exercise come out in favour of the proposal it would comply with Policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP DPD and section 16 of the NPPF.