

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

DATE: **22ND JULY 2015**

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

SUBJECT: **FULL APPLICATION - SITING OF 52 ADDITIONAL STATIC CARAVANS TOGETHER WITH LANDSCAPE PLANTING AT TREETOPS CARAVAN PARK, TANLAN HILL, FFYNNONGROYW**

APPLICATION NUMBER: **052937**

APPLICANT: **TREE TOPS CARAVAN PARK**

SITE: **'TREE TOPS CARAVAN PARK'**
GWESPYR
HOLYWELL
FLINTSHIRE

APPLICATION VALID DATE: **20TH NOVEMBER 2014**

LOCAL MEMBERS: **COUNCILLOR. G. BANKS**

TOWN/COMMUNITY COUNCIL: **LLANASA COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

REASON FOR COMMITTEE: **SITE EXCEEDS 2 HECTARES IN AREA**

SITE VISIT: **YES. REQUESTED BY CHAIRMAN.**

1.00 SUMMARY

1.01 The application is for the expansion of the existing caravan site onto a greenfield site adjacent to the existing park. The proposals would provide an additional 52 caravans. The proposals include significant landscaping works and additional planting.

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

2.01 Conditions:

1. Time limit on commencement.
2. In accordance with plans.

3. No obstruction to route of footpath during site works.
4. Foul and surface waters drained separately.
5. No surface water to public system
6. No land drainage to public system
7. Integrated drainage scheme to be submitted and agreed
8. Scheme for parking, turning, loading and unloading of vehicles to be agreed.
9. Implementation of hedgerow supplementary planting and site landscaping schemes. Maintenance for minimum 5 years.
10. Approval of details of proposed caravans, including finish colours, prior to any other development.
11. No external lighting.
12. Samples of all hard surfaces to be submitted and agreed.
13. Caravans only for holiday purposes and not dwellings.
14. Register of occupants to be kept.

3.00 CONSULTATIONS

3.01 Local Member

Councillor G. Banks

No response at time of writing.

Llanasa Community Council

No objection.

Highways DC

No objection subject to the imposition of conditions and notes.

Public Rights of Way

No objection. Public Footpath 20 abuts the site but is unaffected. Requests condition that the path is protected during construction works.

Pollution Control Officer

No objection.

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water

No objection subject to the imposition of conditions.

Natural Resources Wales

No objection.

The Coal Authority

No objection. Standard advice applies.

Wales & West Utilities

No objections.

SP Energy Networks

No response at time of writing.

The Ramblers Association
No response at time of writing.

4.00 PUBLICITY

- 4.01 The application has been publicised by way of a press notice, site notice and neighbour notification letters. At the time of writing this report no letters have been received from third parties.

5.00 SITE HISTORY

5.01 **348/77**

Extension to site
Permitted 24.10.77.

383/77

Siting of additional wardens van in lieu of holiday van.
Permitted 24.10.77

13/96

New reception/utilities building
Permitted 4.5.96

97/1052

Creation of woodland walk and visitor car park, siting of recycling bins and erection of security barrier to caravan park entrance.
Refused 5.12.97

99/1179

Replacement site managers dwelling
Permitted 4.1.2000

036991

Extension to existing park to add 36 new standings
Permitted 26.4.04

048180

Siting of 10 No. static caravans
Permitted 22.3.2011

6.00 PLANNING POLICIES

6.01 Flintshire Unitary Development Plan

Policy GEN1	-	General Requirements for Development
Policy GEN3	-	Development in the Open Countryside
Policy T5	-	Extension of Existing Static Caravan Sites
Policy AC13	-	Access and Traffic Impact
Policy D1	-	Design Quality, Location and Layout
Policy D2	-	Design Policy

- D3 - Landscaping Policy
- L1 - Landscape Character

National Policy

Planning Policy Wales (Ed.7 2014)

Technical Advisory Note 13: Tourism

7.00 PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.01 Site and Surroundings

The site comprises a 2.14 hectare field parcel located to the south of the existing caravan park. The site is accessed via an existing opening in the northern field boundary. The field is bounded by existing hedgerows on all boundaries with other agricultural fields to the south and east. The remainder of existing caravan park lies upon land to the north and west. The site slopes downhill from south to north and in this respect is reflective of the surrounding topography. It is comparatively flat across its east - west axis. The site lies in close proximity to the village of Gwespyr. Access is proposed to be derived via the existing access from the existing caravan site onto the adjacent New Road.

7.02 Proposed Development

The applicants operate the adjacent Tree Tops Caravan Park. The applicants wish to use the application site for the purposes of providing a further 52 static caravan pitches. The proposals indicate the provision of an access route around the field. The site boundaries are proposed to be subjected to a scheme of significant landscape planting.

7.03 Main Issues

The main issues in relation to this application are:

- the principle of development in this location having regard to the requirements of policy T5 of the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan (FUDP) and
- impacts on the character and appearance of the landscape.

7.04 Principle of Development

Policy T5 of the FUDP permits extensions to existing caravan sites where they meet a number of criteria. These will be addressed in turn below.

- 7.05
- a) *any increase in the number of standings or units is marginal.*
 - b) *any physical extension of the site is modest.*

The application seeks to provide 52No. pitches upon the site. The site currently consists of 168 standings.

7.06 The existing caravan site extends to some 7.24 hectares in area. The proposed extension seeks to add some 2.14 hectares to this. Whilst, in terms of numbers and area, the proposals amount to an increase of approximately 30%, I am mindful that the site is well screened on all boundaries and is proposed to be the subject of further supplementary planting in these areas which will only serve to reinforce these boundaries.

7.07 I am equally mindful of the advice of colleagues within Economic Development in consideration of this proposal. I am advised that the static caravan sector is extremely important to the tourism economy in Flintshire, especially in the northern parts of the County. I am advised that the site to which this application relates is a very high quality establishment which has won numerous awards and has extensive links with other local businesses which serves to direct visitor spending into other areas of the local economy which in turn is important in safeguarding employment in other smaller rural businesses. Given the site is located within a rural area, it is an important employer in the rural economy in itself.

7.08 c) *the scheme incorporates substantial internal and structural landscaping.*

The site has established hedgerow boundaries to all boundaries and additional boundary planting is proposed. This issue is discussed in greater detail separately below in my assessment of landscape impact.

7.09 d) *the proposal involves improved on site facilities.*

The proposals do not include the provision of any additional facilities. However, given the nature of the site, I would not wish to see permanent buildings within this area of the site as I consider the existing situation of these facilities being within the tree covered area of the existing site to be the preferable arrangement on this site.

7.10 e) *the proposals would not have a significant adverse impact upon existing residential amenity or the community in general.*

The proposals relate to the siting of touring caravans upon an extended but existing caravan site, The proposed site lies within an area of open countryside with the nearest dwellings being some 65 metres to the north in excess of 110m downslope to the north; 580m to the west, 170 metres to the east and 240 me to the south. I do not consider, given these degrees of separation, coupled with the significant screening which intersperse these distances, that the proposals will give rise to adverse impacts upon amenity.

7.11 **Landscape Impact**

Notwithstanding the policy position, I consider the key issue in this case is the impact on the character and appearance of the open countryside. The present site falls within several belts of trees and above the wooded slope leading down to the flat coastal strip. When viewed from the edge of Gwespyr to the west, only the most western fringes of the application site are visible. When viewed from the Coast Road and the minor road leading to the former Point of Ayr Colliery, the site is viewed in the context of a general backdrop of woodland which largely screens the site. The application site forms part of the pattern of fields comprising the open hillside which generally rises above the belt of trees. However, the trees do afford a degree of screening to the northern most of the proposed caravans and only the southern part of the field projects beyond the line of the trees. The visibility of the site from the south is virtually nil due to the break of slope within the topography of the wider area which places the site beyond the line of vision. Visibility from the east is again, almost nil due to the presence of sizeable and mature woodland belts comprising Redwater Wood and the woodland belt extending along the escarpment to the south of Tanlan and Ffynonngroyw.

7.12 Consequently, the extent to which the development as proposed would be prominent on the hillside and would require additional screening from longer distance views is limited to views from the far north (coastal footpath) and the eastern fringes of Gwespyr.

7.13 The application proposes an extensive scheme of additional landscaping and augmentation of existing screening. The site is screened well to its western boundary by a mature belt of hedgerows interspersed with mature trees. This is proposed to be supplemented with the planting of an additional hawthorn hedge and additional native trees. The application site historically had hedges which ran on a north south alignment which were removed when the field was in agricultural use to form a larger field parcel. The proposals seek to reinstate these hedgerows, save for where the internal roadway passes through. This will serve to introduce significant 'fingers' of planting which, once established, will significantly aid in the screening of the site. In addition, where the site is proposed to be terraced to form the platform areas for caravans and roadways, significant belts of landscaping are also proposed upon an east west axis.

7.14 The applicant has provided details to indicate the growth rates of the proposed planting and visual depictions of the effects of the landscaping over a 15 year period. Whilst in years 1 – 5 the effects of the screening are not significant, this must be weighed against the fact that applicant recognises the ecological importance of utilising native indigenous species over other faster growing but non-native evergreens which, in this ecological context, would appear incongruous. However, the screening, in combination with the existing vegetation and its growth over the same period would, after year 5,

combine to provide a very attractive and effective screen. This would sit well in the context of the character of the landscape in this area. As well as ensuring there is adequate planting proposed it is imperative that existing trees within the site are protected and retained as far as possible and the submitted scheme provides for this.

- 7.15 The existing site is obviously well managed and environmental issues are important to the owners. The extended site requires some screening from the north but there are opportunities for additional tree planting to reduce views into the site without greatly reducing the site area or blocking the wide views out to sea. The finished colour of the caravans can also play a part in ensuring they would be less prominent in the landscape and this is a matter which could be conditioned if permission is granted.

7.16 **Site Sustainability**

Although not a policy criteria, due to the sites proximity to the village of Gwespyr, local businesses such as the two public houses would be within walking distance to visitors to the site which would have economic benefits to the locality. The site is located in close proximity to the Public Footpath network in the area and therefore the scope exists to explore the local walks available.

8.00 CONCLUSION

- 8.01 The scale of the extension should be balanced against the overall benefits attributed to this scheme. The proposals bring about a reinforcement of existing hedgerows and the reinstatement of lost hedgerows. A sympathetic scheme of additional tree planting is proposed which serves to ensure the proposals are well integrated into the wider landscape. The scheme serves to meet the increasing expectations which visitors have of the North Wales Tourism industry and in this part of the County, this sector is a significant employer.
- 8.02 Accordingly, I consider that subject to the conditions set out in Section 2 of this report, Planning Permission should be granted.
- 8.03 In considering this planning application 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.

LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

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