

NORTH AND EAST PLANS PANEL

THURSDAY, 1ST JUNE, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J Akhtar in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, D Jenkins,
R. Stephenson, J Heselwood, R Jones,
J McKenna and M Millar

SITE VISITS

The Members site visit was attended by Councillors Akhtar, Anderson, Stephenson, Jones, Millar and Jenkins.

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

3 Late Items

There were no late items.

4 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interests were made at the meeting.

5 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sharpe.

6 Minutes - 9th February 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th February 2023, be approved as a correct record.

7 Subject: 20/08547/FU - Change of use of land for the siting of 8No. glamping units for holiday use, storage building and ancillary works including a new access road at land off Hall Park Road, Walton, Wetherby, LS22.

The report of the Chief Planning Officer requested Members consideration on an application for change of use of land for siting of 8 glamping units for

holiday use, storage building and ancillary works including a new access road at land off Hall Park Road, Walton, Wetherby, LS22.

Members of the Panel had attended a site visit earlier in the day. Slides and photographs were shown throughout the presentation.

Members were provided with the following information:

- 10 more letters in objection to the proposed site had been received since the report had been published. The issues raised were already mentioned in the submitted report. Issues of concern were contamination of land and the footpath, which Members had walked along during their site visit. A letter from Cllr Stables was also read out which objected to the planning proposal and agreed with the points made by other ward councillors. It highlighted concerns for road safety as Hall Park Road has no footpath and cars travel along it at speeds reaching 60mph. This would be used by pedestrians for walks and as access to the village.
- An additional condition in relation to CCTV was to be added to those conditions listed in the submitted report for further details to be provided on CCTV, particularly in relation to siting of the same.
- It was noted that during the site visit Members had requested details of disabled access for the site. Officers had spoken with the applicant who was amenable to make 1 unit accessible for disabled people.
- It was noted that the applicant has control of the fields to the west and south of the proposed site and these would continue to be used for grazing.
- The proposal was for 8 glamping pods, 5 to be located on the north-west of the site and 3 on the south-east of the site. The first 20 metres of the access road was to be constructed of tarmac, with the remaining track to be constructed of a grass stabilisation product known as Geogrid system. The development would be served with a modest car park for up to 11 car parking spaces, including 1 for electric vehicle charging. A bin store and small timber storage shed were also proposed adjacent to the car parking area.
- The proposal also included a footpath link towards the village of Walton and landscaping of wildflowers and mixed natural planting.
- The design of the pods was timber clad structures located above ground which measure 7.3 x 3 metres externally with a height of 3 metres. The pods would be screened with new tree and whip planting.
- Drainage for the units for grey and foul water would be linked to the public sewer system which it was noted was to be agreed later.
- The site would be set back approximately 90 metres from Hall Park Road with natural screening.
- The site is located to the north-east of Walton which is a small village of approximately 225 occupants and benefits from a limited range of local services and community facilities.
- Members were advised that Walton is part of a conservation area. However, the site is 300 metres from the conservation area and the land is rural land not green belt land.

- The Neighbourhood Plan suggests that long range views should be protected. The proposal in its current iteration does not adversely impact on long range views and is regarded as being in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan.
- It was the view that there would be little impact on the countryside, however the small number of tourists could help the economy of the area. The glamping site was not too conspicuous, screened from the road and away from residential properties. A noise impact assessment suggested that noise nuisance would not be an issue for concern.
- In relation to biodiversity the natural tree cover would be enhanced with new planting to increase the biodiversity net gain. The area is known for Great Crested Newts and the applicants had offered to consult with Natural England to assist in the management of the pond.
- In relation to drainage, the residents in the area have raised concerns as there is already a significant problem with sewerage during periods of heavy rainfall. The report specifies a condition that prior to any work on the site a feasibility study should be carried out to address ongoing issues in this location with drainage. It was noted that at the time of writing the report Yorkshire Water had not submitted any objections.
- It was noted that details were required in relation to the proposed footpath link between Bickerton and Walton and would need to be approved prior to the development, such that this could be controlled by way of planning condition. The Panel were advised that no PROW officer had been available to clarify the current position of the footpath.

In attendance at the meeting speaking in objection to the proposal were:

- Cllr Lamb - Wetherby Ward Member
- Mr Chris Johnson
- Mr Phil Robinson

The objectors informed the Panel of their concerns which were:

- The number of inaccuracies in the submitted report including:
 - Not sustainable
 - Not accessible, particularly for those with sight or other access difficulties.
 - It was noted that there is no regular bus service available, and the nearest bus stop is a 20 minute walk away.
- Cllr Lamb said that this is a forward-thinking neighbourhood, which welcomes appropriate development. The Neighbourhood Plan was good and should be applauded. It had achieved a 1st in the National Award Scheme and had been agreed by Leeds City Council
- Walton is a quiet rural village adjacent to Thorp Arch Village which is a rapidly expanding area, but with no suitable associated travel packages to support the expansion.
- Drainage in the location of Hall Park Road is an ongoing issue especially during heavy rainfall. Residents in the area complained of having raw sewage in their gardens. This issue had been addressed with Yorkshire Water, but no solution to the problem had been found. It

was the view that if the site was to be developed and link into the sewer system it will cause more adverse issues.

- Hall Park Road was dangerous to walk along as there were no footpaths and in some places no grass verges, such that even current local residents do not walk along this stretch of road. Highways had promised traffic calming measures for this road in 2022 to reduce the speed of vehicles travelling along it. To date no traffic calming measures had been put in place.
- Concerns were also raised in relation to the importance of the area for local wildlife.

Responding to questions from the Panel the objectors provided further information on the following:

- The farmer who owns the land which the proposed footpath crosses has said that there is no public right of way across his private land and disputes public access. The farmer also has concerns that the access is narrow, and he uses it for his farm vehicles.
- The National Planning Policy Framework requires that tourism should be encouraged and local businesses supported, but this proposal has led to displacement of a tenant from the land who has farmed in the area for many years.
- There are no bus services serving this location, which in general has very poor accessibility.
- There had been no contact with the Parish Council from the applicant. Consultation seemed to comprise only one visit to the site and a brief discussion with some local residents on that occasion.
- Residents in the area have been dealing with the drainage issue for 30 years. Yorkshire Water had been to assess the situation on numerous occasions and had removed 11,000 litres of water from a neighbour's garden on one occasion in November 2021. It was noted that when the drainage system fails the residents are unable to use their toilets or take a shower. The Panel were advised that Yorkshire Water said separately to a Ward Councillor that they had not yet assessed the site, so were unable to say if the issues were solvable. A site visit is needed by Yorkshire Water.
- Members were advised that no ramblers used the pathway from Bickerton to Walton. Hall Park Road was not used for walking, the gate on the track was closed and track was only used for moving farm vehicles.
- The Panel were advised that the track is unlit and extremely dark and there were concerns for safety. Locals do not use the track to pass and repass due to this, as well as the poor surface to the track.
- The Members were told the grazing land used a rotation system. Currently there were horses grazing there but the field had been used for cattle previously. The Panel noted this was the last grazing area and it was supposed to be retained.

The Agent Ms Sockett attended the meeting on behalf of the applicant and provided the Panel with the following information:

- The proposal was for 8 small units on the outskirts of Walton offering quiet short breaks for mainly couples.
- What is proposed is what is only absolutely necessary to provide a glamping facility on this site, such that the extent of development proposed is kept to the absolute minimum.
- The proposed development is sympathetic to the nearby St Peter's Church, other key views and existing wildlife / nature on the site.
- Proposed landscaping would provide ecological benefits for the area, through the design layout, wildflower planting and maintenance of the site.
- The closest unit would be 150 metres from the nearest residential property. Appropriate separation distances have therefore been ensured.
- A footpath would link the site to Hall Park Road, this would be constructed using a Geogrid system to provide access and be suitably robust for ongoing use, but retain a natural look.
- In consultation with Yorkshire Water who have said the sewerage system can be linked and could be beneficial to residents in the area to in fact possibly ease existing drainage and sewerage issues.
- This proposal would provide business for the area, and this would be in accordance with planning.

Responding to questions from Panel Members the following information was provided:

- It had been decided not to consult with the community as this was a small development and they had opted to do the consultation through the planning process. It was noted that the Panel were of the view that consultation with residents should be encouraged.
- In relation to drainage issues the Agent said that they were aware of some leaks in the system and flooding issues. However, she was of the view that this was a technical issue, which could be resolved with Yorkshire Water.
- The Agent went into some detail regarding the types of drainage and sewerage problems experienced on other sites, such as to provide reassurance to Members that – in her experience of working on a variety of sites – there had not been situations and difficulties which could not be resolved in conjunction with Yorkshire Water and solutions they suggested.
- It was clarified that Yorkshire Water have not submitted an objection to the proposal. The process would now be – as with many other development sites across the country – that there would be a pre-commencement condition attached to the permission requiring a technical solution to be found and details of that to be submitted within the 3-year 'window' for commencement of development. If a technical solution could not be found, development could simply not be commenced, and the proposal could not proceed.
- In relation to making the units accessible for disabled people, she said that the units could be easily modified using ramps and for those who were visually impaired. No specific details could be provided at the

meeting, but this would form part of the more detailed design for planning. It was noted that one or more of the units could be modified to be fully accessible.

- The agent said that she had not seen the deeds for the land, so was unable to comment on the access of the footpath. However, people do not usually have an issue when repairs and maintenance of pathways are offered. It was noted that the landowner had not been spoken to by the agent.
- The design of the glamping site had been done in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan ensuring that key views remained, and the units were away from residential properties.
- It was the view of the agent that the small development would not have an impact on the roads around the area, as there were to be only 8 units, so only a small increase in the number of vehicles. Signs would be used to direct visitors to use the footpaths.
- In relation to mature trees in the area, an assessment had been carried out and the trees would be protected during construction with the loss of no trees. Only a small section of hedgerow would be removed, and landscape planting was to be provided.
- This site was for people mainly couples who wanted a quiet break. They would be able to bring their own alcohol if they wished to do so. A noise assessment had been undertaken and it was the view that the site would have little impact in relation to noise nuisance. Should residents have complaints, contact details would be provided. Should anyone be found to be acting in an anti-social way they would be asked to leave the site immediately. This was not proposed as a site for stag and hen parties.
- The site would be operational 365 days a year providing maximum economical benefits. During hours of darkness torches would be provided and light sensors were to be used to minimise the effect of light pollution from site lighting.
- The agent advised the Panel that a site manager was to be employed as an emergency contact who would live close by and be on 24 hour call out.
- There was no discussion about increasing the number of units, this was to be a long-term investment.
- The applicant proposed to use a gate to the site which would be accessible for wheelchair users.
- The agent was of the view that dogs would not be allowed on the site, due to grazing animals. However, if this restriction was not maintained long-term there would in any event be the installation of stock-proof fences and robust hedgerows on the boundaries to protect grazing animals. Ongoing maintenance of the site would ensure that any 'breaks' on the boundaries would be remedied.
- It was noted that Natural England would be consulted in relation to the Great Crested Newts and their management. Work would only be undertaken once the necessary licence(s) had been obtained from Natural England and work could proceed legally under the licence(s).
- Recycling bins would be provided.

Officers responded to questions from the Panel providing the following information:

- In relation to the proposed traffic calming measures which had been promised in 2022, the Highways Officer was unable to provide information on why there were delays. He said that he would check and provide an update to Members.
- The proposed pumping station would be a subterranean unit which was standard for this type of development.
- The position was clarified again with regards to Yorkshire Water, confirming that they had not raised a formal objection in their role as consultee when consulted on the proposal. Conditions were proposed that would prevent commencement of development until a solution to any potential sewerage and drainage problems was found
- In relation to Condition 25 it was suggested that the log burners in the units should only use smokeless fuel.
- The units would use solar panels for electricity, and a backup generator would also be installed which had a low noise output. There were currently no details where this would be controlled from.
- Officers acknowledged this location was not well served by public transport. It was noted that Accessibility Standard T2 did not provide a clear definition for this type of development, it mainly related to employment, infrastructure, health, education and retail.
- It was recognised by officers there was no policy on glamping sites, and this could be investigated for the future to assist Members with their consideration of any future sites.
- Members were provided with clarification on the definition of PROW and possible current ownership of / responsibility for the trackway, subject to confirmation of this following further investigation into and overlay of plans.
- Comment could not be made on what may be developed on this site if permission were not given to the current proposal, nor what Members may like to see on the site. Members must focus on the application submitted and before them for determination.

Members comments included:

- Protocols for Panels when considering camping / glamping sites.
- Confusion over ownership of the footpath.
- Pedestrian links to village unsafe and dark.
- Drainage issues, no evidence submitted to resolve the situation.

Cllr Barry Anderson proposed a motion to refuse the application for the following reasons:

1. No public transport
2. Drainage issues
3. Footpaths / PROW issues and uncertainty
4. No clarification on disabled access
5. Proposal contrary to Policy BE2 of the Walton Neighbourhood Plan

This was seconded by Cllr Stephenson.

Officers advised Members that if they resolved that planning permission should be refused then officers, in accordance with established protocol, would bring back a further report to Plans Panel for Members to consider the detailed wording of suggested reasons for refusal based on the Panel resolution. On being put to the vote this motion was not carried with 2 votes for, 6 votes against and no abstentions.

Cllr Heselwood proposed a motion to defer the application for further information on:

1. Highways
2. Footpaths
3. Drainage
4. Disabled access
5. Consultation with community

This was seconded by Cllr Ray Jones, and on being put to the vote was carried with 6 votes for, no votes against and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED – To defer the application for further information as set out above.

8 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the next meeting of North and East Plans Panel will be on Thursday 29th June 2023 at 1.30pm in Civic Hall.

The meeting concluded at 15:40