

Item. 9 (I)

Location: Land off Hopton Road, Garboldisham

Proposal: Erection of 25 single storey holiday lodges, reception building, groundskeeper building and associated access and parking

REFERENCE: 3PL/2019/0416/F

Applicant: Property 192

Author: Rebecca Collins

Summary of Agents comments made after the publication of committee report

It is requested the application be deferred from Committee and that an extension of time on the application be agreed to allow time to address the matters raised within the committee report.

In addition, there appears to be some inaccuracies in relation to the understanding and reference to the common. No reference is given to the previous planning history of the site, for a public Zoo and that permission was implemented by the imposition of the access and footings of some of the buildings. That permission was granted for a tourism and public use at that time, what significant policy and other changes have taken place. That use would generate very high numbers of visitors.

Matters relating to highways are easily resolvable.

Further ecology information is to follow, which is being discussed with Norfolk Wild Life Trust. Reference made to policy CP10, is incorrect as it is out of date. When policies are out of date, the matter should be considered in accordance with the NPPF. Also, what NWT are asking is to essentially undertake Habitat Regulations Assessment level impact assessment for a site which is not statutorily designated, which is excessive.

There also appears to be some misunderstandings what the common land actually is and its intended purpose, with reference to 'additional pressure' being put onto the Common. This website confirms the management of the Common, next to the application site, where public use and public access is being highly encouraged. There is already a management strategy and process in place in relation to the Common.

Tourism Need/Justification for this site

- The permitted use for a Zoo
- There is no foundation or evidence for your assumptions this is not a suitable location for tourism
- The Council recently approved new tourism development in surrounding parishes
- The site is located in an ideal area for tourism, close to Thetford Park, there is an Art Gallery in Garboldisham, Banham Zoo is nearby, people enjoy the countryside and walks in Norfolk.
- There are a number of examples of tourism accommodation of different types within a 2 mile radius of the site.
- Tourism numbers in Norfolk have been increasing rapidly, resulting in more demand
- The occupancy rates of nearby tourism accommodation is high
- The council has approved housing in the village, commenting that it is a sustainable location generally

- A tourism justification report, looking at tourism demand in the area and occupancy rates of accommodation and cross referencing this with data and statistics is to be prepared.

Things for people to do:

- There are a range of pubs and restaurants in the nearest parishes including Hopton
- There are various walking routes
- Banham zoo is nearby
- The village has an Art Gallery and other things
- The site itself and accommodation provides for tourists to enjoy the lodges, tranquillity of the site and being in the open air
- Site is very close to Thetford forest
- The site has great road links to a variety of areas

Existing tourism accommodation in the area:

1. Directly opposite the site is Ingleneuk Lodge, which is a 4 star bed and breakfast accommodation. This site was approved as a C1 guest house, so the usage exceeds that allowable by ancillary use of a dwelling and was specifically approved as a guesthouse. Facilities include guest lounge and bar
2. Directly opposite the site is Alderwood Lodges site. Alderwood has self-catering holiday lodges.
3. Garden Retreat, Garboldisham - Self contained holiday accommodation unit
4. The Old Bakery, Fersfield - Large holiday home with grounds
5. The Barn Fersfield (this is a holiday home at the same site as above)
6. Virginia Barn, Hall Lane, Blo Norton, East Harling (Holiday home, large accommodation)
7. Blo Norton Hall, Hall Lane, Botesdale - A mix of large holiday homes, grounds and accommodation
8. The Old Rectory, High Street, Hopton (Pub, restaurant and bar with tourism accommodation)
9. Mill House Bed and Breakfast, High St, Hopton, Diss
10. Riddlesworth Park Glamping, Home Farm, Diss (Glamping and camping site)

ASSESSMENT

The application has been recommended for refusal on the basis of in Principle reasons for refusal with regards to the justification in terms of Policy DC8 of the Breckland Core Strategy which can be given full weight in the applications determination, as well as for reasons of landscape impact and ecology and highways. Officers do not consider the in principle objections to the application can be overcome and have recommended refusal on this basis. It is not considered a further extension of time or additional information would overcome these concerns.

Comments with regards to the Common are noted but do not change the officer recommendation.

The 'Relevant Site History' section of the committee report highlights the earlier Zoo consent. This is not considered a relevant material consideration to this application for the following reasons:

- The use was never substantially implemented/existed.
- Planning permission was granted in 1996 and pre-dates current policies.
- The lack of the Zoo in the current location would not result in a need, diversification, expansion or attraction, required by Policy DC8 for tourist development in this location.

Reference to policy CP10 being 'out of date' is incorrect, due weight to policies is to be applied by the decision taker, as has been done in the Committee report and as the policy does not relate to 'housing land supply', it can along with DC8 and DC11 be afforded full weight.

The list of 'local' tourism provided, fails to meet the requirements of Policy DC8, as set out in the officer report and reason(s) for refusal. Specifically part (h) states the development is '*well related to an existing settlement and facilities*' and (k) '*the particular countryside attraction that the new buildings will support*'. In terms of distance, accessibility, suitability of the highway network and sustainability, it is not considered that this proposal in this location would meet any of the necessary criteria to be acceptable in principle.

With regards to other 'local' tourist accommodation, each case must be considered on its own merits. Some of the accommodation listed falls outside of Breckland and therefore the subject of other adopted development plan policies and where this involves the conversion of existing buildings then Policy DC20 is relevant (this is not the case in this instance).

CONSULTATIONS

NCC Ecology

Further to our conversation [with the applicants ecologist] yesterday [18/06/2019] and following discussions in a team meeting we can confirm that our previous comments still apply. The proposal lies immediately adjacent to two County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Oak Plantation and Broomscott Common. There is a proposed footpath link leading directly onto Broomscott Common CWS and therefore potential for impacts needs to be assessed. We would need to see an impact assessment in accordance with Policy CP10.