

Agenda Item A7	Committee Date 7 December 2009	Application Number 09/00874/CU
Application Site New Spath Farm (formerly known as Capernwray Old Hall Farm), Capernwray Road, Capernwray, Over Kellet	Proposal Change of use of redundant farm buildings to caravan storage and the demolition of three structures	
Name of Applicant Mr and Mrs D Wightman	Name of Agent Mason Gillibrand Architects, 16 Willow Mill, Caton, Lancaster LA2 9RA	
Decision Target Date 3 December 2009	Reason For Delay Awaiting additional information on traffic implications of the development.	
Case Officer	Peter Rivet	
Departure	No	
Summary of Recommendation	Approval with conditions	

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

- 1.1 This site is on the north side of the road from Over Kellet to Capernwray. The former farmhouse at Capernwray Old Hall Farm is a Grade II Listed Building dating from the late seventeenth century, but the associated farm buildings - which are now redundant - are of modern construction and are of no architectural interest.
- 1.2 The surrounding area is for the most part open countryside, though part of the adjoining site is used for tractor sales and servicing. The farmyard complex adjoins the access road serving New England Caravan Site, but the current proposal is not directly related to it or the other caravan sites in the Capernwray area.

2.0 The Proposal

- 2.1 The applicant wishes to use the redundant farm buildings for the storage of caravans. Their intention is to cater for caravan owners who do not have suitable storage space at home. It is expected that generally speaking, caravans will be collected on Fridays and returned on the following Monday.
- 2.2 It is stated in a letter that all the caravans will be stored under cover. There is no intention to use the former farmyard for open storage. A small amount of maintenance and minor repair will be required for some of the buildings; a slurry pit and a couple of small silo stores are to be demolished. This does not however involve development requiring planning permission.
- 2.3 In response to a request from the County Council, a Transport Assessment has been provided in support of the application.

3.0 Site History

- 3.1 Previous applications on this site relate to alterations to farm buildings (and the provision of a slurry store) and are not directly relevant to the present proposal.

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following consultation responses have been received:

Consultees	Response
Over Kellet Parish Council	No objection to the demolition of three of the buildings on the site. They accept that farmers have to diversify. However they have concerns about the number of caravans involved, and the possibility of the road being blocked. They ask whether it would be possible to limit traffic to and from the site to particular times of day. They are also concerned to ensure that the site should not be used for caravan sales and that any advertising on the site should be strictly controlled.
Lancashire County Council Highways	The information available on a similar (though larger) site elsewhere indicates that traffic levels are not particularly high, and arguably less than the former agricultural use. On this basis they do not wish to object but they ask that traffic movements should be concentrated via the easterly main access.
Lancashire County Council Archaeology	No comments to make on this proposal.
Environmental Health	Recommend that the site should not be used for caravan repairs.

5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 Eight objections have been received from local residents, on the following grounds:

- Traffic danger from cars towing caravans on a narrow country lane used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. This already serves three major static caravan sites, an agricultural vehicle repair depot, a light industrial site, a religious retreat and a diving centre.
- Likelihood that the site would be used for repairs to caravans as well as storage.
- No provision has been made for toilet facilities for people working on the site.
- The caravans would be a target for thieves.

6.0 Principal Development Plan Policies

6.1 Of the policies in the Core Strategy, the most relevant is **ER6** which seeks to maximise the potential of tourism to regenerate the local economy.

6.2 "Saved" Policy **E20** of the Lancaster District Local Plan covers agricultural diversification. It states that outside established settlements, the conversion of permanent and substantial buildings to business and tourism use will only be permitted where suitable services are available, without the need for works which would adversely affect the character of the area.

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.1 There appears to be a significant demand for touring caravan storage from people who travel to the Lancaster area from places further south and then travel to the Lake District, North East England and Scotland. Many of them do not have anywhere at home suitable for storing a caravan.

7.2 The concern of local residents about the level of traffic associated with the proposed use will be noted. Their perception of the road as busy does however need qualification; it is not normally heavily used by urban standards. For most of the time it is very quiet. The major exception is early on Saturday and Sunday mornings when the section of Capernwray Road outside the diving centre attracts queues of people who want to be the first in the water there. It is unlikely that many people would arrive to collect or return caravans at these times.

7.3 It could be argued that a storage use of this nature should be accommodated on an industrial estate. However the employment benefits would be very small and much of the land allocated for

employment uses within the District is, with the exception of Caton Road, some way from the trunk road and motorway network. There would appear to be little advantage in directing a use of this kind to land on industrial estates at the White Lund or Heysham; this would merely add extra mileage to the journeys of people collecting or returning caravans on roads which are already congested. Given that the majority of caravanners are likely to local tourist area such as the Lakes, this site is considered to be an appropriate location for what would be a relatively low-impact use.

- 7.4 The concern of the Environmental Health Service about using the premises for repairs is noted. It would be impracticable to prohibit these completely as caravans stored over a long period will inevitably develop minor faults (such as flat tyres) which would require attention. This issue can be addressed by means of a suitably worded condition. As previously noted, the adjoining suite is used for maintaining tractors so the incremental effect of minor repairs can be expected to be small. It is however desirable to condition any consent to ensure that it is not used for breaking up caravans.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 For the reasons indicated above the location is a sustainable one for this kind of development, in that the site is relatively close to the A6 road and the M6 motorway, and it brings back into use an existing building. It is considered that the use proposed is a legitimate form of agricultural diversification and, subject to protective conditions, the use can be supported.

Recommendation

That Permission **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard three year condition.
2. Repairs to caravans to be restricted to essential maintenance, to be defined in a Management Plan submitted to the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the use.
3. All towed vehicle movements to be made via the eastern site entrance.
4. No caravans to be broken up on the site.
5. No Sales to take place from the site.

Human Rights Act

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

Background Papers

None.