

**Report to District Development
Management Committee**

**Report Reference: DEV-015-2016/17
Date of meeting: 30 November 2016**



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject 1: Planning Application EPF/1912/16 - Woodland Camp, Manor Road, Lambourne RM4 1NB - Upgrade and renewal of the recreational facilities on the site to provide short stay all weather accommodation in order to ensure the site's continued use for recreational purposes. The proposal includes:

- (a) the demolition and replacement of the existing central pavilion building.
- (b) the refurbishment of 3 existing cabins, caretaker's lodging, and removal of mobile homes/pitches, and the provision of replacement with 42 new purpose-designed cabins including a new caretaker's lodging.
- (c) The removal of a number of outbuildings and their replacement with 2 purpose-designed storage sheds.
- (d) The construction of a new service and refuse compound.
- (e) General landscaping works, and
- (f) The upgrading of the existing entrance drive to improve safety and security including new signage.

Subject 2: Related Advert Application EPF/1924/16 - Woodland Camp, Manor Road, Lambourne RM4 1NB – Advertisement consent for proposed new camp site sign next to site entrance.

Responsible Officer: Nigel Richardson (01992 564110)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendation(s):

(1) That planning permission for EPF/1912/16 be granted subject to the conditions as set out below:

- 1. The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this notice.**
- 2. With the exception of the caretakers lodge the cabin accommodation to be provided on the site shall only be used for short stay accommodation in connection with the recreational use of the site. This cabin accommodation shall not be used for residential purposes.**
- 3. Prior to the first occupation of the development the access arrangements, vehicle parking and turning areas as indicated on the approved plans shall be provided, hard surfaced, sealed and marked out. The access, parking and turning areas shall be retained in perpetuity for their intended purpose.**
- 4. No unbound material shall be used in the surface treatment of the vehicular access within 6 metres of the highway boundary.**

5. There shall be no discharge of surface water onto the Highway.
6. The Recommendations (section 5) and the Conclusion (section 6) of SES's Phase 1 Habitat Survey submitted February 2016 shall be followed in full. Reports must be supplied to the Local Planning Authority where appropriate and as recommended in the report. This will include survey work to be submitted and approved before any building works commence on site in respect of the following:
 1. Bats (roosting surveys)
 2. Great Crested Newt
 3. Breeding Birds
 4. Hazel Dormouse (see details)
 5. Invertebrates (phase 1 only)
 6. Reptiles (phase 1 only)
 7. UK BAP / NERC Act mammals and amphibians
7. Any amplified music to be played on the site shall be confined to the inside of the central pavilion. No outside amplified music shall be played.
8. No development, including works of demolition or site clearance, shall take place until a Tree Protection Plan Arboricultural Method Statement and site monitoring schedule in accordance with BS:5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations) has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved documents unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.
9. No trenches or pipe runs for services and drains required to service the development hereby approved shall be cut or laid otherwise than in accordance with BS5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction (Recommendations), except with the approval of the local planning authority. Any works within the calculated root protection areas shall be fully supervised by an Arboricultural Consultant and a report detailing the work undertaken / supervision shall be sent to the local planning authority within 28 days of the work being undertaken.
10. The development hereby permitted will be completed strictly in accordance with the approved drawings numbered A-0031, C-033, E-035, 038, 039, B-032, D-034, 024B, 051A, 006, 052A, 005, 3-053, 054, 021A, 003B, 061, 062A, 013A, 001a, 015a, 017A, 023B, 044A, 012a, 016A, 018B, 022A, 004, 055, AT.WC.02,1-041, 2-042, AT.WC01, AT.WC03, 002a, 011A.

(2) That Advertisement Consent be granted for the associated application EPF/1924/16.

REPORT

This application is before this Committee since it is “large scale major” application as defined within guidance issued by the DCLG (Pursuant to The Constitution, Part Two, Article 10 (b))

Description of Site:

A large 17 acre site located on the west side of Manor Road some 100m south of the junction with New Road. The south and east section of the site, about 40% of the total area, is currently in use as a caravan site with a number of timber buildings located near the end of the main access drive. The whole site contains many mature trees and the site is well screened from view along Manor Road.

Description of Proposals:

EPF/1912/16 - Upgrade and renewal of the recreational facilities on the site to provide short stay all weather accommodation in order to ensure the site's continued use for recreational purposes. The proposal includes a) the demolition and replacement of the existing central pavilion building, b) the refurbishment of 3 existing cabins, and provision of caretaker's lodging, c) the removal of mobile homes/pitches, and their replacement with 42 new purpose-designed cabins d) general landscaping works, and f) the upgrading of the existing entrance drive to improve safety and security including new signage.

EPF/1924/16 - 'Woodland Camp' directional sign is proposed on each side of the mouth of the widened entrance. These outdoor weather proof metal signs will be 1.5m wide and 0.7m in height and will be mounted just 0.5m above ground level. They will be externally lit by a low luminance trough light shining down on the face of the signs.

Relevant History:

The site has a long established use as a caravan, camping and recreation site. This use was confirmed as lawful by CLD/EPF/0011/94.

Policies Applied:

CP2 – Protecting the quality of the rural and built environment.
GB2A – Development in the Green Belt
DBE1 – Design of new buildings.
DBE9 – Loss of amenity.
NC4 – Protection of established habitat.
RST1 – Recreational, sporting and tourist facilities.
LL1 – Rural landscape.
LL10 – Adequacy of provision for landscape retention
ST4 – Road safety
ST6 – Vehicle car parking.

National Planning Policy Framework

Summary of Representations:

LAMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL – The Council strongly objects to this proposal, supporting local residents of Lambourne End, and endorses the objection letter that

has been submitted by Smart Planning on behalf of the residents. The Parish Council also submits an objection letter from Lambourne Parish Councillor Pat Price and supports all her points of objection.

NEIGHBOURS – 54 properties notified and the following replies were received;-

SMART PLANNING – planning consultants, writing on behalf of 39 householders in the local area, object on the following grounds. The proposal is not a small scale recreational facility but a significant establishment. The new buildings increase building bulk – by 42% according to the application, and consequently the proposal will not preserve openness in the Green Belt. The proposed cabins will affect views from Manor Road, they are not discrete and there is inadequate screening. Light pollution will also be caused. The proposal will result in a disproportionate intensification of use on the site. In terms of highways and traffic there is no public transport in Lambourne End and therefore there will be a considerable increase in car/taxi/coach movements which would be unsustainable on local roads. 111 car spaces are referred to on the application forms compared to the current 25. There is inadequate visibility at the site entrance and the proposed illuminated sign will be a distraction. In terms of ecology the sprawl of buildings, particularly in the west portion of the site, will be likely to conflict with nature conservation interests, and disturb wildlife. Insufficient information is provided at this stage to understand the impact of the development on bio diversity, and to grant planning permission in lieu of this information being supplied would be likely to result in harm to protected species. With regard to impact on neighbours this large enclave of habitable accommodation would be out of character with the rural landscape and increased traffic will disturb peace and quiet in a tranquil setting. Local residents also suffer from some existing disturbance from the site. There will be an additional demand on the local sewage system which is already problematic, and water run off from many cabins will discharge into the local watercourse. With regard to sustainability the development would not contribute to local shops and the rural economy, and it would result in sprawl, dependency on private vehicles, and it is not a sustainable development as per the NPPF. For the above reasons the proposal would be contrary to Local Plan policies RST1, DBE2, DBE4, NC1, LL1 and LL2.

LOCAL PARISH COUNCILLOR PAT PRICE – Objection – on similar grounds to the above - and also that the development will not benefit the local community, but rather will be detrimental to its needs, character and well being by reason of additional traffic, noise pollution, and a further strain on already inadequate services. Lambourne End consists of 100 or so houses and a population of 200 residents - so the expected number of visitors to the site would double that. It is of concern that trees are to be felled since they act as a noise barrier as well as a visual screen, the proposed development makes a significant shift towards permanent buildings for residential accommodation. If the viability of the proposed use collapses then a holiday camp or residential accommodation would be applied for.

In addition to the above 17 letters of objection have been received from the following addresses, some of which are included in the 39 addresses referred to in the objection letter from the planning consultants Smart Planning;-

NEW ROAD – 1 and 2 Rachels Cottages, Prior Cottage, Moss Side, Poultry Farm, Priors, Lambourne House, Orchard Cottage, and 3, Priors Cottage

MANOR ROAD – 3, Isabella Cottages, 6, Tuttlebury Cottages, Millers Farm, Banks Barn Barn, Forest Cottage, Thirza House

And 2, Park Square, and Hook Lane House, Hook Lane.

These 17 neighbour letters raise very similar objections to those already set out above.

ESSEX CC HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY – No objections – the proposal will not significantly intensify the vehicle movements above the level that the lawful use could. The proposal will modernise and improve the existing access onto Manor Road which will benefit all highway users. The vehicle movements associated with the site are unlikely to coincide with peak hours so there will be no capacity issues either. Further to this the accident data has been interrogated for the last five years and there are no recorded accidents associated with the use of this or the site opposite. Consequently, the Highway Authority is satisfied that the proposal will not be detrimental to highway safety, efficiency or capacity. From a highway and transportation perspective the impact of the proposal is acceptable to the Highway Authority subject to conditions being attached.

EFDC TREES SECTION – No objections subject to the imposition of a tree protection condition, and a condition relating to trenches and pipe runs. An arboricultural report was submitted with the application and discussions have taken place with the agents. It is noted that the cabins will be mounted on micro piles which is welcomed.

EFDC COUNTRYCARE SECTION – No objections - subject to a condition requiring that the Recommendation (section 5) and conclusions (section 6) of the submitted SES's phase 1 habitat survey be followed, and that this will include survey work being submitted on the following:-

1. Bats (roosting surveys)
2. Great Crested Newt
3. Breeding Birds
4. Hazel Dormouse (see details)
5. Invertebrates (phase 1 only)
6. Reptiles (phase 1 only)
7. UK BAP / NERC Act mammals and amphibians

Issues and Considerations:

The main issues raised by this application are whether the proposed development is an appropriate one in the Green Belt, whether it would detract from the rural character of the locality, and whether it would give rise to noise and disturbance, and unacceptable highways and traffic problems.

Green Belt issues.

The applicants are the Amana Trust a Christian based charity based in the adjoining borough of Havering. The site was until recently owned by the Methodist Church and has been principally used for many years for young peoples' activities. Accommodation has been provided in caravans and 3 permanent log cabins with facilities being provided in a pavilion. The Amana Trust wish to continue this recreational use of the site, for both young people and adults, but they wish to provide better all weather short stay accommodation principally in the form of timber cabins. The Trust are attracted by the woodland setting of the site since they wish to provide a genuine rural retreat suitable for day seminars, weekend breaks, and week

long training sessions. They readily accept that a condition would be applied to any consent that restricts the use of the site for short stay recreational use only – in order to differentiate the approved use from a residential use which would not be acceptable. In conclusion officers are satisfied that the proposal amounts to a continuation of the site's recreational use, a use which is appropriate in the Green Belt. Consequently, the proposal is in accordance with Local Plan policy GB2A, and the NPPF.

The proposed development would be carried out in 3 phases. Phase one would be the provision of 20 cabins and replacement of the existing central pavilion with a more modern two storey but timber clad pavilion facility. Phase 2 would comprise of the refurbishment of 4 existing cabins for short stay accommodation, a replacement caretakers cabin, and 3 new purpose designed cabins. Phase 3 would introduce an additional 18 cabins. These phases would be implemented over a 5 to 10 year period, and at a pre application meeting the Trust were advised to apply for all 3 phases in one go to avoid the perception of development 'creep' ie applying for cabins in an incremental manner. Most of the cabins would contain 2 bedrooms with toilet and shower, and would measure 5.2m in width by 8.5m in width, and would be 3m to eaves. In order to provide a better 'fit' in this woodland setting the Trust were also advised that cabins should have sloping roofs rather than flat roofs. The application states that the new floor space provided would represent a 42% increase over the existing – although if the size of more modern and larger mobile homes were taken into account the additional floor space would be smaller than 42%. In this connection the site licence allows for 60 caravans/mobile homes to be placed on the site although this number has not often been reached. In any event the existing site is a very large one covered with trees and vegetation and many cabins will be placed under the canopies of trees. In addition the cabins will be placed on micro piles so they will stand proud of ground level, hence avoiding the need for concrete or hard surfaced bases to be provided. The additional volume of development will therefore be discreetly accommodated across the south and east parts of the site, and as mentioned above the site is effectively surrounded by a screen of trees. For these reasons the proposed additional buildings will not materially affect the openness of the Green Belt, and they are considered to be of an appropriate scale and appearance to complement the recreational use of the site.

Access and transport issues

At the junction with Manor Road the existing vehicular access to the site will be widened and re designed, and amended plans show the removal of a tree and part of hedgerow so as to provide for improved driver visibility sightlines. As suggested by residents at a pre application public meeting the first part of the access road will be widened to allow two way working, and signs will be erected at the mouth of the entrance to assist visitors in finding the site entrance. The Highways Authority raises no objections to the proposal and welcomes the proposed improvements to the Manor Road vehicular access to the site. The applicants contend that vehicular movements to the site will not be radically different from the previous usage of the site, and most vehicles would arrive out of peak hours, typically at the weekends or evenings. The Amana Trust encourages the use of public transport and will provide shuttle mini bus services for visitors, particularly for young people, to transport people to and from Grange Hill underground station (1 mile), and Romford Overground station (7.2miles).

Amenity issues and response to representations received.

Concern has been raised about possible noise problems from activities on the site.

The applicants point out that a recent complaint about loud music after midnight on 7/8/16 did in fact emanate from a dwelling nearby at not from this Woodland Camp site. The applicant seeks to continue the Christian focus of use of this camp site and the tranquillity of the countryside is a significant part of the appeal of the site. They already have camp regulations in place that state *'we have neighbours on all sides of the perimeter therefore the noise level for music played must be heard only in the vicinity of Woodland Hall (central pavilion) - there shall be no noise at all after 10.30 pm outside the camp buildings'*. The applicants have also stated that they do not allow amplified music and in this context it is unlikely that the proposal would lead to noise and disturbance. However, in any event the applicants are willing to accept a condition that no amplified music will be played on the site other than within the central pavilion.

In terms of possible loss of visual amenity most neighbouring dwellings do not in fact adjoin the site boundary. Most are located to the north along New Road and therefore lie close to the northern 60% of the site which will not contain any cabins or buildings. Views over the site are dominated by tree cover and any views of cabins/buildings will be over considerable distances and where buildings will appear small and heavily screened. The garden to one dwelling at Priors, at the junction of Manor Road and New Road, does however adjoin the 'development' part of the site. However whereas at present caravans are located 11m from this boundary the nearest proposed cabin will be sited 23m away. In addition this neighbour has a very large garden where the dwelling is over 60m from this rear boundary, and again there are many mature trees close to the boundary that provide effective screening. Bearing in mind the above factors the proposed development will have a small impact on the visual amenity of nearby residents. Finally, a concern has been raised that trees on the site are to be removed. However only 3 small trees are to be removed from the boundary owing to their poor condition, and given the dense nature of trees on the site their removal will not detract from the screening effect the trees on the site provide.

Concerns have been raised also about possible light pollution, increased water run off into local water courses caused by erection of buildings, and aggravation of local sewer problems. With regard to lighting a plan has been submitted and shows LED low level bollards with light shining downwards, recessed pedestrian lighting on decking areas, and security lighting on sensors as appropriate. This is a modest level of lighting and given the heavily wooded nature of the site any light pollution will be kept at an acceptable level. With regard to water run off all the 42 cabins are to be erected on micro piles so that they stand above ground level – hence existing water percolation through the ground will not be disturbed. In respect of the local sewer the applicants have had detailed discussions with the Environment Agency and Thames Water and based on these discussions they plan to provide a rising main link to the main sewer some distance along New Road.

Some objectors fear that the numbers that may attend the site, up to 200, will match the total numbers of residents in Lambourne End and lead to infrastructure problems. However, meals and services will be provided on site for visitors and hence people staying at the site will not leave it for food and provisions. In addition, visitors will only stay on site for short periods, mostly up to a week, and in reality it is likely that occupation levels on the site will be lower than the peak of 200 for a large part of the time.

Two directional signs

These signs will not unduly detract from the street scene. They are also an

appropriate form of directional sign which will assist visitors in locating the site and therefore help to reduce the possibility of cars stopping or turning round along Manor Road.

Conclusions:

In essence the proposal seeks to continue the use of the site for recreational use, an appropriate use of a Green Belt site which lies close to London. Timber clad cabins are proposed to replace mobile homes in order to provide a more weather resistant form of accommodation. The appearance and bulk of these cabins in a woodland setting is acceptable. The applicants propose a camp site that has a Christian focus making good use of the sites wooded and tranquil setting – and in this respect activities carried on are likely to be quieter than commonly found on a commercial camp site open to the general public. For these reasons, and those set out in the report above, it is recommended that conditional planning permission be granted – together with advert consent for the proposed directional signs.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report item please use the following contact details by 2pm on the day of the meeting at the latest:

***Planning Application Case Officer: David Baker
Direct Line Telephone Number: 01992 564514***

***or if no direct contact can be made please email:
contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk***