Place Services
Essex County Council
County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH
T: 0333 013 6840
www.placeservices.co.uk
@PlaceServices

Horsham District Council
Parkside
Chart Way
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

18/03/2024

For the attention of: Robert Hermitage

Ref: DC/24/0356 - Staalcot Farm Stall House Lane North Heath West Sussex

Thank you for consulting us on the planning application for the Use of land for the stationing of 4 static caravans and 4 touring caravans for residential purposes, together with the formation of hardstanding and associated landscaping. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	X
Supportive subject to attached recommendations and / or conditions	
Further information required prior to determination	
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	

Overall, given our concerns regarding adverse impacts on the landscape and insufficient supporting information, we are of the judgement that the application does not comply with Policies 23, 25, 31 and 33 of the HDPF and therefore conflicts with the NPPF. However, if minded for approval, a number of recommendations and documents for submission are included.

Site Context

The application Site is located to the east of North Heath hamlet, accessed from Stall House Lane which runs along the south-eastern boundary of the Site. A railway line runs close to the west of the Site however is separated by a pastoral field and established hedgerows. Stall House Lane is a dead-end road which provides access to a number of properties and farm buildings to the east. The A29 Stane Street is located 0.6km to the west providing access to Pulborough to the south and Billingshurst to the north.

The Site itself comprises two pastoral fields separated from Stall House Lane by an established hedgerow and tree lined boundary. The north-western boundary remains open since the application Site comprises only part of a larger pastoral field.

17th Century (Grade II listed) Laurel Cottage is located adjacent to the Site on the opposite edge of Stall House Lane. The Site is located within a red Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) DWS8561 - Prehistoric Lithic Working, Mine Pits, Glass Working Industry and Medieval Farmsteads, West Chiltington and Pulborough "*where new building(s), ground excavation or landscaping may have major adverse impact on nationally important and other significant archaeological sites*".

A public right of way (PRoW) runs along the south-western Site boundary and then runs north alongside the Arun Valley trainline before crossing. Another PRoW runs close to the Site along the access track to Stallhouse Farm in the north-east.

We previously responded to an application for the same site and layout under reference DC/23/2098 which was refused.

Planning Context

Horsham District Planning Framework

The Horsham District Planning Framework Proposals Maps identifies the site as being located outside the defined built-up area boundary and therefore designated as countryside. Policy 26: Countryside Protection sets out a presumption against development unless for agriculture, forestry minerals, recreation or ensures the sustainable development of rural areas. It also goes on to say that development permitted must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character location and must not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside and/or conserves, and / or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.

Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character also sets out that proposals will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape and townscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.

Policy 23: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation sets out the following [inter alia];

- "*There must be no significant barriers to development exist in terms of flooding, poor drainage, poor ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installation where conventional housing would not be suitable;*

- *The site must also be large enough to provide adequate vehicle parking, including circulation space, along with residential amenity and play areas;*

- *The site is located in or near to existing settlements, or is part of an allocated strategic location, within reasonable distance of a range of local services and community facilities, in particular schools and essential health services;*

- *The development will not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and the amenity of neighbouring properties, and is sensitively designed to mitigate any impact on its surroundings.*"

The proposals should also have regard to Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity which requires development to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should be compliant with Policy 33: Development Principles which states that proposals should be distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, townscape features, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments.

Review of the submitted documents

The application has not been supported by a landscape and visual appraisal, though we have made the professional judgement that the given the predominant rural character of the immediate area, with limited residential properties and farms, the proposal would have an adverse impact on landscape character. Views are however partially mitigated by the presence of the hedgerow along the roadside boundary which prevents some views into the Site.

We do have reservations regarding this proposal and the likely impacts it would have on the local landscape. The application Site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) South Low Weald

(LW5) of the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (2003). Key relevant characteristics of this LCA include low-lying, flat to gently undulating landscape, small pastures, variable condition hedgerow network, old hedgerow alignments marked by isolated oaks, semi-natural copses, remote rural character and winding lanes link scattered farmsteads. Land Management Guidelines also state; "*consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land-use change. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials*".

The Site is also located within LCA J1 Billingshurst and North Heath Farmlands of the Horsham Landscape Character Assessment. Key relevant characteristics of this LCA include gently undulating landform, small to medium fields enclosed by hedgerows, copses and woodland blocks, mature field trees following hedgerows and lanes, semi enclosed landscape. The area also has a strongly rural undeveloped character. A key sensitivity to change is the small scale incremental changed eroding the character.

Based on the above LCAs, we judge that the proposals will have an adverse impact on the character of the local landscape, particularly considering its rural undeveloped context.

Grade II listed Laurel Cottage is located in close proximity of the Site, on the opposite edge of Stall House Lane. The application will adversely impact the setting of the heritage assets located close by and therefore conflicts with Policy 34 of the HDPF.

The application Site is located within the countryside and does not accord with the criteria outlined for acceptable development under Policy 26 Countryside Protection. The proposals for 4no. static and 4no. touring caravans will contribute to the overall level of activity along Stall House Lane and therefore impact the sense of tranquillity within this area.

We have concerns regarding the potential visual impact of the proposal on the Public Right of Way (PRoW) that runs adjacent to the site on the south-west boundary. Whilst the vegetated boundary of the application site may provide screening of the proposal from the existing footpath, the submitted application does not provide any information on the condition of the site boundaries. It is also feasible that in the winter months when leaf cover is limited, visibility of the proposals may be more. We therefore have concerns that the proposal does not comply with Policy 26: 'Countryside Protection', whereby proposals outside of the BUAB must aim to conserve the tranquillity and ecological features of the landscape.

Whilst the application is supported by a Block Plan, we are of the judgement that insufficient detail is included within the plan to provide an informed landscape response. Limited detail is also provided regarding the proposed hard and soft landscaping, and proposed boundary treatments. There are also areas of trees and hedgerow that have been omitted from the landscape plan, such as along the hedgerow boundary which runs adjacent and joins the north-eastern site boundary.

Overall, given our concerns regarding adverse impacts on the landscape and insufficient supporting information, we are of the judgement that the application does not comply with Policies 25, 26, 31 and 33 of the HDPF and therefore conflicts with the NPPF.

However, if minded for approval, we would advise the following recommendations are taken into consideration:

- A native hedging and understorey planting around the site boundaries. As suggested, this hedge should be planted in double staggered rows, preferably 5 plants per linear metre. Though we would recommend this is accompanied by a 3-strand galvanised wire and timber post fence through the centre of the staggered row of hedge to prevent access through by pedestrians until the hedges are fully established. We would also advise that the following mix is used:
    - 60% Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)
    - 20% Field maple (Acer campestre)
    - 10% Hazel (Corylus Avellana)
    - 5 % Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa)
    - 5% Trees (Wild Cheery, Oak or Hornbeam)

- Whilst we are pleased to see a number of trees proposed throughout, the north-western Site boundary should include further mitigation planting to reduce potential views from the PRoW. We advise that a wider planted buffer is proposed to allow for more hedgerow and tree planting to establish and therefore contribute to the Land Management Guidelines of LCA LW5.

In the event that approval of this application is forthcoming then the following conditions should also be considered:

- Landscape Management Plan for a minimum of 5 years. This should be accompanied by a responsibility areas plan and maintenance work schedule.
- Detailed soft landscape plan; this should include plant species, number, density/spacing, location and sizes of the proposed planting.
- Detailed boundary treatment plan that clearly shows the position of new fencing in relation to existing and proposed planting.
- Detailed hard landscape plan that includes material, pattern, finish, colour and location of all areas.

If you have any queries regarding the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Cowell BA (Hons) MA
Landscape Consultant

Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of Horsham District Council. Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.