

Coberley Parish Council

Planning Application Reference: 14/02614/FUL

Location: Land Parcel Opposite Windmill Farm, Hartley Lane, Leckhampton Hill, Coberley, Gloucestershire, ,

Proposal: Change of use to mixed use for the keeping of horses and for Gypsy and Traveller residential purposes, together with the development of a stable building and the relocation of the existing stable building

Coberley Parish Council has been requested by parishioners to oppose the above application for the following reasons which have been established both through a public meeting on 30 July 2014 and through individual consultations with parishioners:

The site is in an AONB.

Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework states: *“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.”*

The residential caravan site and additional stable block proposed in the application, would have a detrimental impact on, and therefore harm the open countryside landscape and scenic beauty.

The cumulative impact of the development sought in this application, the existing permitted stable block on the application site and the nearby block of stables for which planning permission was granted in October 2011 (11/03641/FUL) would result in unacceptable suburbanisation of the area and domestication of a rural site which is out of keeping and out of character with the prevailing character and appearance of the area.

Although it is recognised that, in line with appeal decisions in August 2013, the caravans and other materials which are currently on land in close proximity to the application site, are due to be removed within a maximum of 3 years from the appeal decision date, (i.e. in two year’s time), their presence compounds the suburbanisation. Indeed, that appeal decision found that the harm to the AONB was of paramount importance and it suggested that the temporary permission was only considered based on the reduced site in appeal D. It would appear logical therefore, that any additional development of adjacent sites, such as is being requested here, would cause major harm to the AONB.

The applications 14/00303/FUL, and previously 12/03218/FUL, for the erection of stables on what is Pitch 2 of the current application site, were refused on the grounds that “The cumulative impact of the proposed development together with the existing stables that are in close proximity to the application site would result in an unacceptable suburbanisation of this attractive rural area that would have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.” Logically, therefore, this application, if successful, would result in significantly more suburbanisation than the recently refused proposal.

We consider that the site is visible from surrounding land, with the Cotswold Way National Trail immediately adjacent. The contrast between the proposed use and the agricultural land which existed there up until recent years could not be starker; it is clear that the effect of the development on the character and landscape will be one of significant harm.

One of the longest sections in Cotswold District of the Cotswold Way National Trail, described as one of the great walks of the world and the most beautiful in England, runs through Coberley Parish. It runs immediately past the entrance to the application site. We would suggest that the proposed development of this site would have an inappropriate and adverse impact on the environment which all who have an interest in the management and maintenance of British countryside, must surely wish to see preserved.

An application for a development in the near vicinity was refused on similar grounds some 2 years ago. CDC had considered two main themes in coming to this decision; “whether the proposal would be sustainable development in the countryside”; and “the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, which lies in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)”.

It is recognised that local councils have an obligation to provide suitable sites for gypsies and travellers who need to settle down, but this site is considered unsustainable, being dislocated from the main residential areas of the parish and in an isolated location.

There is concern that the site does not have the appropriate facilities to sustain the proposed extended families due to this isolated location and lack of community facilities nearby. The Agent’s Correspondence states that the site is served by mains water and electricity. However, it has recently come to the Council’s attention that the applicants appear to be approaching Cheltenham Borough Council for a wayleave in order to gain an electricity supply. This would suggest that the statement in the correspondence is not accurate and exacerbates the unsustainability of the site.

The Department for Communities and Local Government document “Planning Policy for Traveller Sites” indicates:-

Policy B: Planning for traveller sites; para 9:

d) relate the number of pitches or plots to the circumstances of the specific size and location of the site and the surrounding population’s size and density

e) protect local amenity and environment

Policy C: Sites in rural areas and the countryside

Para 12. When assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, local planning authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community.

The latter would surely be the case if this development was to be permitted. The number of inhabitants would exceed those in the nearby households.

Policy B also states in Para 11 c): “ensure that children can attend school on a regular basis.”

In considering this application, CDC should enquire as to whether there is available capacity in schools within suitable travelling distance from the site, as it is the Council’s understanding that this may not be the case in the local schools.

We are not aware that the applicants have any connection with the parish or local community and they have not included any justification as to why they have a need or should have a right to live in that location. Adherence to planning policy must be paramount and the applicants’ ownership of land should not be a justification to create developments in an unsustainable location, harmful to the AONB, suburbanising a rural area.

The application is for a “Change of use to mixed use for the keeping of horses and for Gypsy and Traveller residential purposes”. To our knowledge, and that of parishioners living in the immediate vicinity of the site, it has not been used for the keeping of horses to date, even though permission was granted for one stable block (on Pitch 1), which was subsequently built; nor indeed has the adjoining site on which an application was made for stables with success in 2011 and which were also built. It is clear to us therefore, that the applications for stables have been part of a wider strategy towards gaining planning consents for residences over the whole site by stealth.

There is concern that additional light pollution will be caused from the site, thus causing harm to residents in the area.

There is concern that it will lead to increased traffic movement on Hartley Lane. The Cotswold Way uses Hartley Lane at this point and there is no verge or pavement for walkers along Hartley Lane in this area. In addition, traffic delays at the Air Balloon roundabout, particularly in morning and evening commuting hours, precipitate the use of Hartley Lane as a ‘rat-run’ for a certain amount of traffic.

Surface water run-off from the development has resulted in an increased level of flooding on Hartley Lane immediately south of Windmill Farm, and the agricultural land around it. Flooding as a result of the transformation from permeable agricultural land to hard standing associated with development is recognised in Gloucestershire County Council’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of September 2008.