
2015/1020

Mr Edward Cockburn

Caravan storage on hardcore base (Retrospective)

Ranah Stones, Whams Road, Hazlehead, Sheffield, S36 4HT

Dunford Parish Council have not commented

Councillor Andrew Millner supports the proposal

11 Letters of support received

No objections received

Site Description

Ranah Stones Farm is a sheep and dairy farm situated in a rural area of the Green Belt which is located to the east of Whams Road, Hazelhead and overlooks the Peak District National Park. The surrounding land has been identified as an important 'core' site for breeding Lapwing within the Dark Peak region. The farm currently operates under the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme in order to improve the farm habitat for wildlife and breeding birds.

The site is accessed from a long track from Whams Road. The site consist of a L shaped farmhouse, this is accompanied by a number of agricultural buildings, and also includes an area of hardstanding set to the west of the main buildings which is used to store caravans. The caravan storage facility has been operating at the farm since September 2006. The facility has capacity for 48 caravans at any one time, the caravans are stored against the backdrop of the agricultural buildings. A hedge has been planted along the boundaries to screen the caravans from views from Whams Road and the surrounding area.

Proposed Development

The application is retrospective for the caravan storage and hardcore base at Ranah Stones Farm. No complaints have been received by the Council regarding the activity, however the applicant now wishes to regularise this use. As the site is set within the Green Belt the applicant has submitted very special circumstances in order to justify the need for the facility. These include:-

- The supplementary income the facility generates allows for less intensive farming to take place at the site. The farm has been identified as an important 'core' site for breeding Lapwing within the Dark Peak region. A Breeding Wader Survey by Waxwings Ornithology has been submitted by the applicant in support of this.
- The Countryside and Economy Advisor from the Peak District National Park Authority has stated that 'having a reduction in cattle numbers through compliance with the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme has meant a drop in the farm's productivity for livestock, but a great increase in its productivity fir Lapwing. Should the farm have to intensify its productivity it would likely have a detrimental impact upon the habitat.'
- There is no other facility of this type within the local area
- There is a national issue with caravan thefts from housing estates and insurance companies are demanding secure storage when not in use.
- Some property deeds do not allow storage of caravans
- Crime reduction
- The site is protected by its remote location which has a private access road, secure gates and CCTV.
- The site has operated informally for 10 years without complaint

Policy Context

Planning decision should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The development plan consists of the Core Strategy and the saved Unitary Development Plan policies. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

The Council has produced the Publication Consultation Document of the Local Plan. It establishes policies and proposals for the development and use of land up to the year 2033. The document is a material consideration and represents a further stage forward in the progression towards adoption of the Local Plan. As such increasing weight can be given to the policies contained within the document although this is still limited by the need to consider any comments received during the consultation and with the knowledge that the Inspector can require changes to the plan.

Barnsley UDP Saved Policies

UDP Allocation – Green Belt

GS8 'Development within the Green Belt' states that the construction of new buildings will not be permitted unless it is for purposes including agriculture.

GS30A 'Touring Caravan Storage' Proposals for the use of existing or proposed screened compounds or buildings for the storage of touring caravans will be considered on their merits, particularly with regard to Green Belt policies, visual intrusion, access and traffic factors, residential amenity and other planning policies.

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy

Policy CSP21 - Rural Economy

Policy CSP26 – New Development and Highway Improvement

Policy CSP34 - Protection of Green Belt

Policy CSP36 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Paragraphs of particular relevance to this application include:

80. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

89. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:-

- Buildings for agriculture and forestry

28. Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To enable this to happen plans should:-

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings

Consultations

Dunford Parish Council – No comments received

Highways – No objections subject to condition

Pollution Control – No objections

Ward Councillors – Cllr Andrew Millner supports the application

Representations

11 letters of support from local residents who use the facility have been received. The following comments have been made in support:-

- The applicants are committed to supporting ecosystems for habitats for endangered birdlife
- If the facility is closed it would cause distress and hardship for the people who use it
- Security issues with parking caravans at home
- There is good access to the facility
- No complaints have been received regarding the use
- Caravans cannot be kept at home due to restrictive covenants and the size of the caravans
- The only other storage sites have long waiting lists or have very limited access hours
- There are no spaces at the local sites
- The security afforded at the site is essential for insurance
- The site is screened by tree planting and the visible impact of the facility is very limited due to the distance from the road
- The applicants have spent money improving the site and provides a quality, secure storage facility for caravans

Assessment

Principle of Development

Saved UDP Policy GS30A states that 'Proposals for the use of existing or proposed screened compounds or buildings for the storage of touring caravans will be considered on their merits, particularly with regard to Green Belt policies, visual intrusion, access and traffic factors, residential amenity and other planning policies.'

The supporting text to UDP Policy also states 'the storage of caravans at individual houses can sometimes cause problems, especially if front gardens or driveways are used. The provision of properly located and designed caravan storage compounds and buildings will be encouraged. The use of camping sites will not normally be allowed as these are generally in the Green Belt or open

countryside and the use is not appropriate to a rural area. However, proposals for storage within redundant farm buildings, or farm yards, where the caravans can be screened and largely hidden from view, may be acceptable, but will be determined in accordance with Green Belt policies'.

The site is located within the Green Belt as allocated within the UDP proposals maps. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The use of land for the storage of caravans 'inappropriate development' within the Green Belt and is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The use has been operating for 10 years without the benefit of planning permission however, the applicant now wishes to regularise this use and has put forward a number of very special circumstances in support of the use. A number of letters of support have also been received from the users of the site.

From the justification put forward, it is considered the main issue is the importance of Ranah Stone Farm as a habitat and 'core' site for breeding Lapwing within the Dark Peak region. The applicant states that the supplementary income the facility generates allows for less intensive farming activity to take place at the site and financial figures have been submitted to support this. The applicant has reduced their cattle number to 1.25 livestock units per hectare, which has a significant impact upon the income that can be achieved through farming alone. The income from the caravan storage facility allows the applicant to reduce cattle numbers and improve the habitat for the birds. The Countryside and Economy Advisor from the Peak District National Park Authority has stated that 'having a reduction in cattle numbers through compliance with the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme has meant a drop in the farm's productivity for livestock, but a great increase in improving habitat for Lapwings. Should the farm have to intensify its productivity it would likely have a detrimental impact upon this habitat.'

The caravan storage facility is 'inappropriate development', and therefore harmful to the Green Belt, however the facility allows the farm to supplement its income without having any harmful effect on the breeding site for Lapwings. In addition to this, the site has been operating for 10 years without complaint, there are very few storage sites operating (a search indicates only two other facilities within the area) and the loss of this site would be detrimental to the users of this facility but also would result in the caravans potentially being parked on driveways instead. The planting and other improvements allows for the caravans to be screened from the main road and as a result there is limited impact upon visual amenity. It is considered that substantial weight should be given to this and that the applicant has provided the very special circumstances required in order to allow for a relaxation in Green Belt policy in this instance.

Visual Amenity

The storage of caravans within the Green Belt has some degree of impact upon the openness, however as the site is set adjacent to the complex of farm buildings, caravans in storage are seen against the backdrop of these structures and within a small pocket of development, the impact on openness is limited as the site is largely contained.

In terms of visual impact, significant tree planting along the boundaries successfully screens the caravans from view from the main Whams Road and surrounding areas. As these trees further establish the caravans will only be visible from close quarter or, from within the site. This is in line with saved UDP Policy GS30A which considers that proposals for storage within redundant farm buildings, or farm yards, where the caravans can be screened and largely hidden from view, may

be acceptable, as is the case here. In the interests of amenity it is however, considered pertinent to condition that the site is used for caravan or agricultural storage only and that any permission is personal to the applicant. Subject to these safeguards the impact upon visual amenity is not considered to be significant in this case and is therefore acceptable when measured against policy CSP34 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

The caravan storage has a maximum limit of 48 caravans and highways have not raised any objections to the use. Given the nature of the use it is not considered that development generates any significant levels of traffic. The site is accessed from a long single lane private drive; therefore highways have requested a passing bay is provided which should be conditioned as part of any approval. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of highway safety in accordance with policy CSP26 of the Core Strategy.

Conclusion

In summary the storage of caravans is judged to constitute a form of inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt is limited due to the extensive planting along the boundaries. The very special circumstances put forward by the applicant should allow for a relaxation in Green Belt policy in this instance in compliance with saved UDP Policy GS30A.

Recommendation

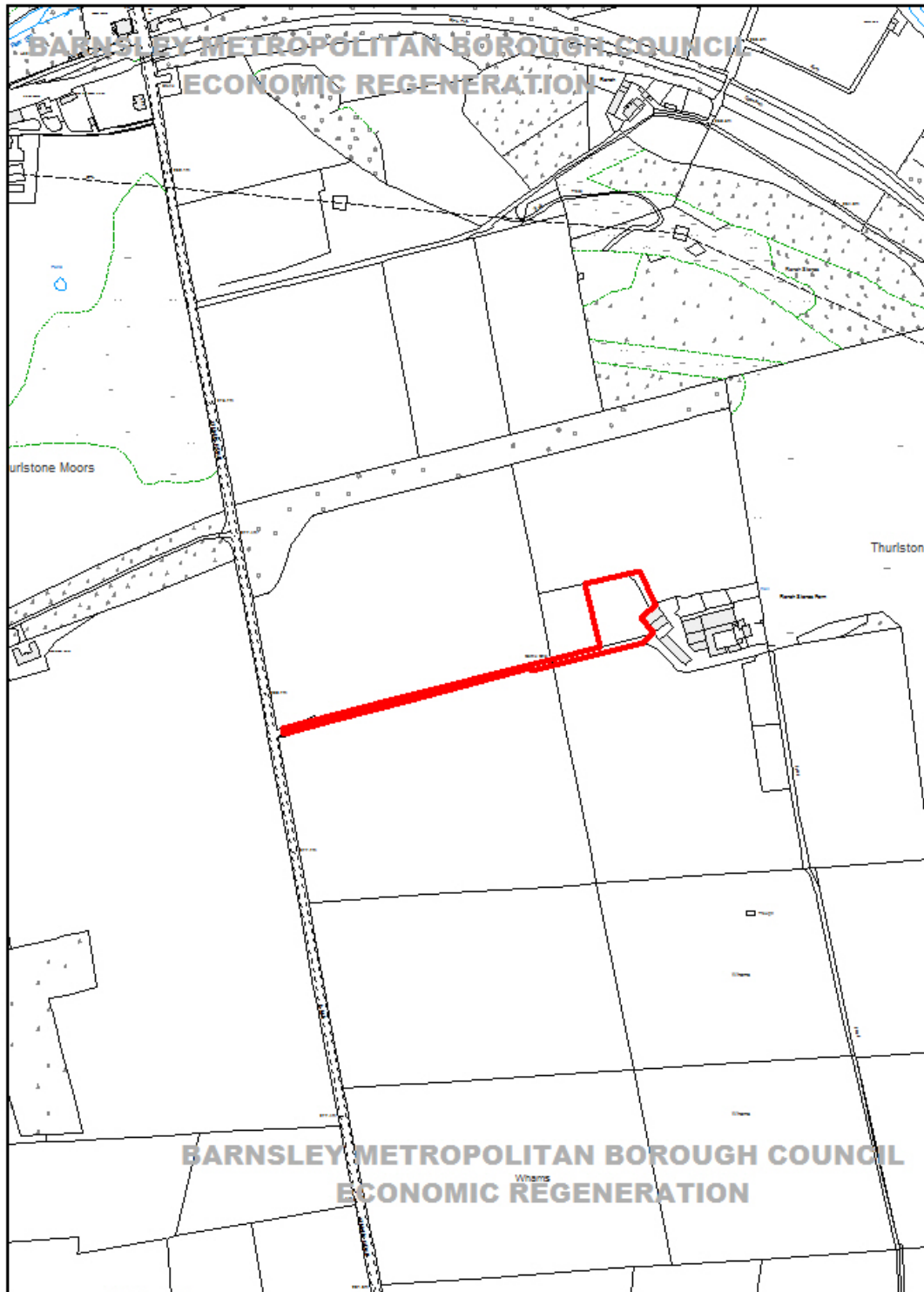
Grant subject to:-

- 1 The development hereby approved shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the amended plans (Site access plan with passing space - received 15th October 2015) and specifications as approved unless required by any other conditions in this permission.
Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality accordance with Core Strategy Policy CSP 29, Design.
- 2 The passing space shall be provided within 3 months of the date of the permission and shall be retained for that sole purpose thereafter.
Reason: In the interest of highway safety, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CSP 26.
- 3 The change of use hereby approved is personal to Ranah Stones Farm and shall be limited to the storage of caravans or agricultural equipment associated with the farm and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Use Class B8 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order).
Reason: To ensure that the use hereby approved remains as part of a scheme of farm diversification and to safeguard the openness of the Green Belt in accordance with policy CSP34 of the Core Strategy.

PA Reference:-

2015/1020

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BARNESLEY MBC - Economic Regeneration



Scale 1: _____