



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 May 2022

by Helen Davies MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/22/3291507

Rails End, Back Lane, Ashton Under Hill WR11 7RG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Locke against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01607/CU, dated 29 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is change of use of existing hardstanding area for the storage of caravans.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for change of use of existing hardstanding area for the storage of caravans, at Rails End, Back Lane, Ashton Under Hill WR11 7RG, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/01607/CU, dated 29 June 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 21/06/21 Location Plan 1:1250; 21/06/22 Existing Block Plan 1:500; 21/06/23 Proposed Block Plan 1:500; and 21/06/24 Proposed Elevations Fencing and Gate 1:100.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on highway safety.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is part of Rails End Nursery, an established agricultural holding. Rails End has been registered with the Caravan and Motorhome Club since 2016, allowing it to provide up to 5 pitches for touring caravans, on a site adjacent to the appeal site. The proposed caravan storage use would utilise the same existing access as the established nursery and touring caravan site uses.
4. The site is accessed off Back Lane, which is a narrow largely single track road. The site access point itself is of a sufficient width and layout to enable vehicles towing caravans to move between Back Lane and the site without difficulty and there is sufficient space on site to turn around. There are two possible routes to the site access point along Back Lane, one is to the north and the other to the south. Henceforth, I shall refer to these as routes one and two respectively.

5. Route one follows a straight and short section of Back Lane, to a T junction with The Groaten. From the site access, the junction can be seen, and vice versa. Therefore, while this stretch of road does not have any formal passing places, vehicles would be able to see if there were any other vehicles, or other road users, along Back Lane. Vehicles could then wait until the road was clear, either at the site access point or at the junction, where the end of Back Lane is wide enough to allow passing.
6. Visibility at the junction is not entirely unrestricted, particularly to the east due to vegetation. However, this section of The Groaten is marked with a 30mph speed limit. At the time of my site visit, which I appreciate is only a snapshot in time, the road was relatively lightly trafficked. No traffic survey information has been submitted to indicate otherwise. Whilst it is anecdotal only, during my site visit, I witnessed a vehicle towing a caravan entering the site, without any difficulty at either the junction or site access indicating the junction radii and road width to be sufficient. The Groaten itself is relatively straight and of sufficient width to enable vehicles to pass. It provides a link to the A46 a modest distance to the east of the junction.
7. Route two follows a much longer section of Back Lane through a series of bends. It does have a number of informal passing places, but the bends would make this a more difficult route to navigate for a vehicle towing a caravan. Despite this, at my visit the road was very lightly trafficked and its narrow and winding nature would significantly limit traffic speeds. Consequently, whilst potentially inconvenient for other road users, this route would be unlikely to result in significant highway safety issues. Regular users of the proposed caravan storage facility would be unlikely to choose this route into the site.
8. The appellants state that the existing touring caravan use has generated an average of 380 caravan movements per year. Despite this level of use, I have been presented with no evidence of any recorded incidents. The proposal has received written support from the Parish Council, as well as a close neighbour and a caravan site user, all of whom note that Back Lane is very lightly trafficked with no history of incidents. The site would store up to 10 caravans at a time, a capacity restricted by site size, which would result in a modest number of vehicle movements, particularly in the context of the existing use.
9. Taken together, the above factors indicate that the site has been regularly and frequently accessed by vehicles towing caravans for a number of years, without causing any significant issues. On this basis, I am satisfied that the modest number of additional vehicle movements associated with the proposal would not result in any significant impacts on highway safety.
10. I conclude that the proposed development would not cause unacceptable harm to highway safety. Consequently, the development would comply with Policies SWDP4 and SWDP21 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, which amongst other things, seek to ensure that vehicular traffic from new development is able to access the highway safely and the road network is able to accommodate the type and volume of traffic from the development. Furthermore, it would accord with Paragraphs 110 and 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework which, require that development should ensure that safe and suitable access to a site can be achieved and that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Conditions

11. The Council suggested only the standard time limit and plans conditions. I have considered the suggested conditions and amended them only as necessary in the interests of precision and clarity in order to comply with advice in the Planning Practice Guidance. It is necessary to specify the approved plans as this provides certainty.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above and taking into account the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Helen Davies

INSPECTOR