

Parish: SPROUGHTON

Location: Hope Farm, Bramford Road

Proposal: Change of use of part of land from agricultural to grazing of horses and change of use of buildings to stables. Change of use of agricultural land to caravan storage area (extension to existing caravan storage area) and construction of earth mounds (to accommodate landscaping).

Applicant: Mrs N Bloss

Case Officer: Ben Elvin

Date for Determination: 08.01.09

SITE

1. Hope Farm lies on the west side of the B1113 to the North of Sproughton village. The site hosts a Farm House and cluster of agricultural buildings with associated land and extends to approximately 2.02 hectares.
2. The existing buildings are in various states of repair and appear to be largely unused at this time, though some storage and vehicle parking is undertaken. The areas of land that are the subject of the change of use application are currently rough grassland, with some temporary fencing (taping) within these areas providing demarcation.
3. Access is gained off the B1113 via an access point adjacent to the farm house and the neighbouring property, Wayside Cottage. To the north of the site is a lane known as The Grindle, which is bordered by a mature hedgerow. To the south is a second access onto the B1113, which is used to gain access to the agricultural land beyond this site.
4. Subsequent to the submission of the application additional information has been received and further consultation has been undertaken.

PROPOSAL

5. The proposal consists of two separate elements; the change of use of land for the commercial grazing of horses which includes the commercial use of the stables and five buildings, and the change of use of land for the storage of caravans, which includes works to the second vehicular access which lies to the southern end of the site.
6. The caravan storage area also makes provision for the formation of grassed mounds to the east, west and north boundaries of this part of the site.
7. Subsequent to the submission of the application additional information has been received and further consultation has been undertaken.

RELEVANT HISTORY

8. B/07/01667/FUL (2007) – Alterations to existing access to B1113 – Granted.

7. B/89/01151 (1989) – Continued use of former orchard for storage of privately owned caravans – Granted.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

8. **PPS1:** (Delivering Sustainable Development)
9. **PPS7:** (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas)

PLANNING POLICIES

10. The Development Plan comprises the East of England Plan, adopted 2008, saved policies in the Suffolk Structure Plan, adopted 2001, and the Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) adopted 2006. The following policies are relevant to this proposal:

East of England Plan, 2008

- **SS1:** (Achieving Sustainable Development)
- **ENV7:** (Quality in the Built Environment)

Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No.2) 2006

- **CR01:** (Countryside)
- **CR04:** (Special Landscape Area)
- **CR08:** (Hedgerows)
- **CN01:** (Design)
- **EM20:** (Expansion of Existing Employment Uses)

The relevant documents can be viewed via the internet. Please see Page 4 for details.

OBSERVATIONS

11. PC – make the following comments on the original plans;
- Would not wish to see continued development of the site that would create an adverse traffic impact or adversely affect the landscape.
 - The use is likely to be associated with 'point-to-point' horses, which require a lot of exercise and would need to be exercised off-site on adjacent roads and lanes. This would be inappropriate due to traffic speeds and volumes.
 - The buildings shown as numbers 5 and 6 are remote from the rest of Hope Farm and do not relate well to the rest of the proposal.
 - The hedge to the north of the site, running along The Grindle, is part of an Ancient Hundred boundary. The use of the adjacent land as a paddock must not be allowed to damage the hedge.
 - Part of the site has already been used for the storage of caravans. It is understood that this use was subject to landscape screening. The Parish wishes to be reassured that appropriate landscaping will be carried out.
 - The area to be used for the storage of caravans should not be laid to hardcore but left as grass to retain the rural character.
 - The use of a second access could lead to further development of the site.

Any further comments will be reported at the meeting.

12. LHA –to be reported
13. The Archaeological Service – recommends conditions.

14. Mid-Suffolk District Council (adjoining Authority) – No particular representations to make.

REPRESENTATIONS

15. One letter of objection has been received which makes the following points;
- There is insufficient land with Hope Farm to sustain the amount of horses that are being proposed to make a viable business. DEFRA requires that a minimum of 1 acre per grazing horse and there is insufficient land to meet this requirement.
 - If further land is rented for pasture, horses will need to be taken across the busy road, which would be dangerous.
 - The number of horses will create a large amount of spoiled bedding and manure, which could be a smell nuisance and fire hazard. A proper manure heap should be provided and a proper management plan for the removal of manure put in place.
 - There will be noise.
 - There are traffic safety issues with regards to the access, where horseboxes may not be seen.
 - Hope Farm does not have the appropriate training facilities for race horses, and this will need to take place off site which will increase the frequency of horse boxes to and from the site.
 - Effluent may seep into the watercourses and drains need to be installed to prevent this.
 - Fencing must be provided to ensure that animals can't escape onto the road.
 - The property should be business rated.
 - The access to the caravan storage area is poor and could cause an accident.
 - The erection of earth mounds will spoil the countryside.
 - There are industrial areas that would be more appropriate for the storage of caravans.
16. One letter of comment has been received, which makes the following points;
- Mr and Mrs Bloss have been advertising very recently in The Absolute Horse magazine. The advertisements would indicate that they will be running an equine business from Hope Farm and that the erection of stables is not just simply for their own needs but instead to support their equine business as advertised and also to take in livery.
 - The application should be viewed as a business proposition and the property should be subject to business rates
17. The applicant has responded to these letters and make the following points;
- The lease states that only 5 horses can be kept on the land.
 - Any extra land taken on will be from the same landlord and adjoining the current site.
 - No livery business is to be operated from Hope Farm; this would be contrary to the lease.
 - Does not understand the reference to noise.
 - Manure heap is some distance away from properties and road.
 - Only one horsebox would be run from the site, no additional traffic should occur.
 - Fencing does not form part of this application; therefore the point is invalid.
 - Hope Farm is already registered with Business Rates.
 - The access will be constructed to Highway Authority recommendations.
 - The caravan storage area is not to increase the numbers stored, but to consolidate these to one area.

- Mr Bloss is a freelance horse rider, and travels to sites to ride horses. They are not brought to Hope Farm. This activity was carried out before they occupied Hope Farm.
- The application makes it clear that the proposal is for commercial operations.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

18. In assessing the proposed development, it is necessary to consider the provisions of policy CR01 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006) and the position in respect of the previously approved use of the land. The proposal looks to provide an enclosed area for the storage of caravans, which would be bordered by grassed mounds with hedge planting on top. Each mound would be approximately 1.5 metres in height, and would run along 3 of the boundaries. The existing roadside hedge would be retained, with the new mound behind.
19. Planning permission B/89/01151 granted approval for the continued use of the orchard for the storage of private caravans and the proposal seeks to continue this use but on a differing parcel of land. The previous area on which this use was carried out was on an area of land to the west of the farmhouse and the proposal would no longer be used for this purpose. Indeed, that area falls within the proposed equine area that forms the other part of this application. In respect it is reasonable to require a condition that seeks implementation of the use of the land for grazing of horses prior to the caravan storage area being brought into use. Such a condition would ensure that the previous caravan storage area to the west of the farmhouse could not be used concurrently with the area the subject of the current application.
20. The site lies within the Special Landscape Area where Policy CR04 looks to ensure that development proposals are permitted only where they maintain or enhance the Special Landscape Area and are designed so as to harmonise with the landscape setting. Whilst there are no obvious examples of mounded enclosures in the locality, it is apparent that the storage of caravans on the site previously permitted would be likely to have more of an impact on the surrounding area than that now being proposed. The current site will form a parcel of land adjacent to the road which falls between the existing groups of buildings. In this respect, it is considered that the proposal provides a more appropriate form of development in terms of the impact on the landscape than that which could be carried out under the previous permission.
21. The proposed works to the access are being considered by the Local Highway Authority and their comments will be reported at the meeting. However, the proposal provides for visibility splays for a distance of 70 metres in either direction through some removal of the roadside bank and the cutting back of the hedge. However, the hedge only needs cutting back and can be retained without the need for removal.
22. In terms of the equine use, this is proposed to be carried out on land to the north and west of Wayside Cottage. A total of five existing buildings will be used for stabling and storage, three of which lie to the west of the farmhouse and 2 which lie adjacent to the caravan area. There are no external changes proposed to these buildings and this is considered to be acceptable, in accordance with the provisions of policies CR19 and EM20, and with PPS7.
23. The proposal makes a suitable use of the existing buildings on the site and provides a land use that is appropriate in this location. The site is relatively well screened to the roadside boundaries although some planting will be necessary to fill in gaps in the roadside hedgerow. The training of point-to-point horses on this land is not such that would give rise to any particular detriment to the character of the area, and is a use that is best provided in a countryside location.

24. In conclusion, the proposal provides land uses in this rural location that will provide a more appropriate use of the land than that which currently exists. The provision of landscaping and mounds to the boundaries of the sites will provide an appropriate break from the open landscape beyond. The proposal therefore accords with the provisions of policies CR01, CR04 and EM20 of the Babergh Local Plan.

REASON FOR APPROVAL

25. The proposed use of land for the storage of caravans and for commercial equine activities is considered to be in accordance with the provisions of policies CR01, CR19 and EM20 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006) and with Planning Policy Statement 7 "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas". The use is an appropriate use of this site that provides a comprehensive scheme for the land at the site and consolidates the use of the land for caravan storage for which permission was granted some time ago. The land uses will not give rise to detriment to the character of the Special Landscape Area, and accords with policy CR04.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to conditions as follows:

- Landscaping
- Details of hard-surfacing to caravan area
- As required by LHA
- Details of fencing
- No burning of waste on site
- Details of waste/manure disposal
- Implementation of use of land for grazing of horses prior to the use of land for caravan storage.