

Application No: 16/00892/FULL Full Application

Site: White Meadow Camping, Lepe Road, Langley, Southampton, SO45 1XR

Proposal: Change of Use of land as seasonal camping site and erection of ancillary facilities

Applicant: Camping Unplugged

Case Officer: Katie McIntyre

Parish: FAWLEY

1. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

Referred by Ward Councillor.

2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION

Site of Special Scientific Interest
Special Protection Area

3. PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

DP1 General Development Principles
CP1 Nature Conservation Sites of International Importance
CP2 The Natural Environment
CP8 Local Distinctiveness
CP16 Tourism Development
CP19 Access

4. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

Not applicable

5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Sec 7 - Requiring good design
Sec 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Sec 3 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

None received

7. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Fawley Parish Council: Recommend permission but would accept the decision reached by officers under their delegated powers. Considered to contribute to the local amenities.

8. CONSULTEES

8.1 Ecologist: Recommends refusal

8.2 Landscape Officer: Recommends refusal

8.3 Highway Authority (HCC): No objection

8.4 Natural England: No objection in relation to SSSI subject to conditions

8.5 Tree Officer: No objection

9. REPRESENTATIONS

9.1 Five representations of support:

- The site is not visible from the road.
- Camping offered is basic and provides a fuller experience of the National park.
- Provides a welcome boost to the local economy.
- Good to increase tourism in this area.

9.2 One representation of objection:

- The past 2 years the campsite has been operating numerous visitors have trespassed onto private land.
- The temporary bus stop outside the campsite was dangerous to road users.

9.3 One representation of support from the agent:

- Client would be happy to prohibit camping and vehicle parking within 10m of the woodland edge.
- would be happy to restrict dogs on leads but not to restrict dogs from the site altogether.
- The buildings are not visible from outside the site and therefore it would be hard to argue that they have any impact upon the landscape.
- There is currently no signage for the campsite but a sign would be required.
- Client would be happy to screen the bins or locate these within a timber store.
- Light would be minimal attached to the toilet/shower block and washing up area.

10. RELEVANT HISTORY

10.1 Temporary Stop Notice issued on 28 July 2016 (EN/16/0160):

“Without planning permission the use of the land as a camping and caravan site including the stationing of portakabins and the erection of buildings in connection with the aforementioned use.”

11. ASSESSMENT

11.1 The application site consists of approximately 6 hectares of agricultural fields which are sited outside of the defined New Forest villages within a rural area of the National Park. The site has an existing field access onto Lepe Road and the north western boundary of the site is lined with mature Oak trees. There are no pavements serving Lepe Road and the area has a strong rural character with the area surrounding the site characterised by open fields. The site is located adjacent to a SSSI and also falls within 1.1km of the Solent SPA. An area of ancient woodland is also within close proximity.

11.2 This application seeks consent for a seasonal campsite operating for 5 months together with ancillary structures consisting of a reception building, waste bins and stores, mobile caravan for manager accommodation, toilets and showers, portakabins and washing-up stations which would be spread across the north western boundary of the site. Except for the portakabins, all of the structures would be permanently located at the site even when it is proposed no camping would be taking place.

11.3 By way of background, as a result of an enforcement investigation the Authority served a Temporary Stop Notice on Camping Unplugged (the applicant) in July of last year to cease the camping at the site as well as requiring the removal of all buildings. The Temporary Stop Notice was served for the following reason and was subsequently complied with:

The use and development operations are taking place on the land without planning permission and are contrary to adopted local and national policy. The continuation of the use and any further development operations are harmful to the character and amenity of the area.

11.4 The relevant issues which need to be considered are:

- The extent to which the policies of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy support the introduction of new tourist accommodation in this location;
- The impact upon the character and appearance of the area and the special qualities of the National Park;
- Ecology;
- Trees; and
- Highway Safety

Principle of the development and the impact upon the character and appearance of the area and the special qualities of the National Park:

- 11.5 The New Forest is already well-provided for in terms of holiday accommodation, with many campsites, hotels, dwellinghouses and outbuildings across the Forest being rented as holiday lets. For these reasons policy CP16 (Tourism Development) seeks to ensure any new tourist accommodation would be small scale and allocated to the four defined villages (Brockenhurst, Sway, Ashurst and Lyndhurst). The only circumstances in which permission would be granted for tourist accommodation outside the defined settlement boundaries would be where it forms part of a well-founded farm diversification scheme. These schemes would be achieved through the extension or re-use of existing buildings.
- 11.6 In this case, the application site lies outside of the defined villages, does not relate to a farm diversification scheme and does not involve the re-use of existing buildings. Having regard to this it is considered that the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of Policy CP16 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy. The supporting statement submitted with the application acknowledges the proposal would fail to meet the requirements of Policy CP16. It should also be noted that Policy DP18 precludes new campsites within the New Forest National Park for the very reason that campsites are already well-provided for in and around the New Forest. The supporting text notes that *“although many sites are seasonal they can have a significant impact on the New Forest environment”*.
- 11.7 Alongside the fundamental policy issues referred to above it is also considered the proposal would adversely impact upon the landscape and the special qualities of the National Park, introducing incongruous development that would erode the rural character of the area and result in a gradual suburbanising effect to the detriment of the special qualities of the National Park contrary to policy CP8.
- 11.8 It is recognised that it is not proposed that the camping pitches would be formally laid out at the site and it is also noted that no electric hook ups are proposed. There would however be a number of structures required in order to support the camping use. The bins, stores, mobile caravan and reception building would be located to the right of the access as you enter the site. An area of decking would be to the front of the reception. Eight large bins would also be located in this area; these would not be sited in a compound. To the left of the entrance a number of buildings would be spread across the site consisting of two washing up stations, two portakabins, eight portable toilets and two blocks of showers. These buildings and structures are

considered to be of a poor design and proportions having a utilitarian appearance with domestic elements at odds with the agricultural character of the site. Furthermore it would result in the proliferation of buildings across the site to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area and the wider landscape. The proposal would also have a harmful impact upon the tranquility of this area due to increased signage, external lighting and the general level of activity at the site. National Parks are afforded the highest status of protection with regards to landscape and scenic beauty as is confirmed by paragraph 115 of the NPPF. It is considered for the above reasons the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the wider landscape and the visual amenities of the locality contrary to local and national planning policies.

11.9 The supporting statement submitted with the application states that providing Natural England issue a license to the applicant, camping up to 60 days in a year, but no more than 42 days consecutively, could occur on the land in any event in accordance with the Section 296 of the 1936 Public Health Act. The Authority is not aware that any such license has been granted and the agent/applicant has not provided such a certificate. Notwithstanding this, the application proposes a significantly greater number of days a year (153 days) than that which would be permitted by a Natural England license in any case. Moreover, exempted campsites are exempt from planning control because there are administered by an organisation as low-key sites which have minimal impact on the character and appearance of the locality. They do not permit permanent structures on the land which this application seeks consent for. The 'light touch' of these exempted sites would not be maintained if permanent structures associated with the use were to be permitted. The principle therefore of permanent facilities, such as those the subject of this application is unacceptable. There are many such exempted sites across the New Forest National Park which could make similar arguments in favour of providing permanent facilities, leading to the proliferation of buildings and the further suburbanisation and erosion of the special qualities of the New Forest National Park which would not be acceptable.

11.10 The application also seeks consent for the siting of a caravan which would be used as manager's accommodation. No justification has been provided with the application as to why this form of accommodation is required. Policy CP12 seeks to ensure that any new residential development would be restricted to the four defined villages of the New Forest which the application does not lie within. This policy also states that permission will not be granted for new residential caravans or mobile homes, except in accordance with policy DP13. No justification has been submitted with the application demonstrating an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently on-site in accordance with policy DP13. It would not therefore be appropriate in this instance to

warrant a departure from the strict presumption against new residential uses in the open countryside of the New Forest National Park. The proposal would therefore be expressly contrary to policy CP12.

Ecology:

- 11.11 The site is immediately adjacent to the North Solent SSSI and the southern tip of the site falls within this designation. It is also within close proximity to the Solent SPA, New Forest SPA/SAC and Ramsar as well as the North Solent NNR. The Authority's Ecologist has raised an objection to the proposal due to the significant effects from disturbance impacts likely to arise from the development contrary to policies CP1 and CP2 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 11.12 The Authority is the competent authority in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations when assessing the impact upon internationally designated sites. Policy CP1 seeks to ensure that in the case of any proposals which may affect the integrity of an internationally important site for nature conservation, that the applicant should demonstrate that adequate measures would be put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the ecological integrity of the SPAs.
- 11.13 The ecology report submitted with the application does acknowledge the proximity of the site to the New Forest and Solent SPAs. The report concludes that as these habitats are not located within the areas adjacent to the site, the regularisation of the campsite would not have a harmful impact. The report fails to consider however the potential impact of increased recreational activity can have upon bird populations in protected sites. The very fact that the proposal is for a campsite where people come to the New Forest to recreate has not been addressed. The Authority has adopted the Solent Disturbance Mitigation Project Explanatory Note and this states that in accordance with policy CP1 the Authority will seek contributions from all forms of development, including tourist accommodation, where there would likely be an adverse effect on the ecological integrity of the European Sites. This does not however preclude applicants offering on-site, or other bespoke mitigation measures. This is also similar for the New Forest SPA. No specific measures for mitigation accompany the application and thus without such supporting information, it has not been demonstrated that any additional impact associated with increased pressures arising from the change of use proposed would be mitigated against. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policy CP1 of the adopted New Forest National Park Core Strategy.
- 11.14 The site also lies adjacent to, and forms part of, the North Solent SSSI. Natural England have raised no objections with regards to

the potential impact upon the SSSI subject to a number of conditions including:

- The collection of no firewood in any woodlands;
- Visitors must keep to footpaths through the woodlands; and
- Dogs must be on leads through the woods.

These conditions are not considered to meet the conditions test as set in the National Planning Practice Guidance as they are not precise or enforceable and as such would not be appropriate. It cannot therefore be ascertained that the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon this nationally designated site. The ecology report submitted with the application even states that as *"White Meadow Caravan Park is adjacent to areas of oak dominated ancient woodland, it is likely that visitors will access the nearby woodland for recreational purposes"*.

Trees:

- 11.15 There is a line of hedgerow trees adjacent to Lepe Road which contributes positively to the rural character of the area. The Authority's Tree Officer has confirmed that the proposed structures would not have a harmful impact upon these trees. Within close proximity to the site is also a belt of Ancient Woodland which could be vulnerable to soil damage due to compaction caused by vehicles and tents. It has been suggested that tents should not be located within 15m of the woodland edge. This is not something the Authority could condition.

Highway Safety:

- 11.16 Vehicular access to the site would be via the existing field gate onto Lepe Road. The Highways Engineer at Hampshire County Council has raised no objections to the proposal on highway safety grounds.

Conclusion:

- 11.17 The development would therefore result in the introduction of a new tourist business and residential use within the open countryside to the detriment of the rural character of the New Forest National Park. It would involve the siting of incongruous structures and the proliferation of buildings which would erode the local character resulting in a gradual suburbanising effect to the detriment of the tranquility and visual amenity of the locality. It has not been demonstrated that the proposal would be part of a farm diversification scheme or how it would contribute towards the understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest National Park without harm to the Park's special character. The application also does not put forward adequate measures to avoid or mitigate against the potential harmful impact upon the ecological of the SPAs or habitats and species of biodiversity importance. For

these reasons it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

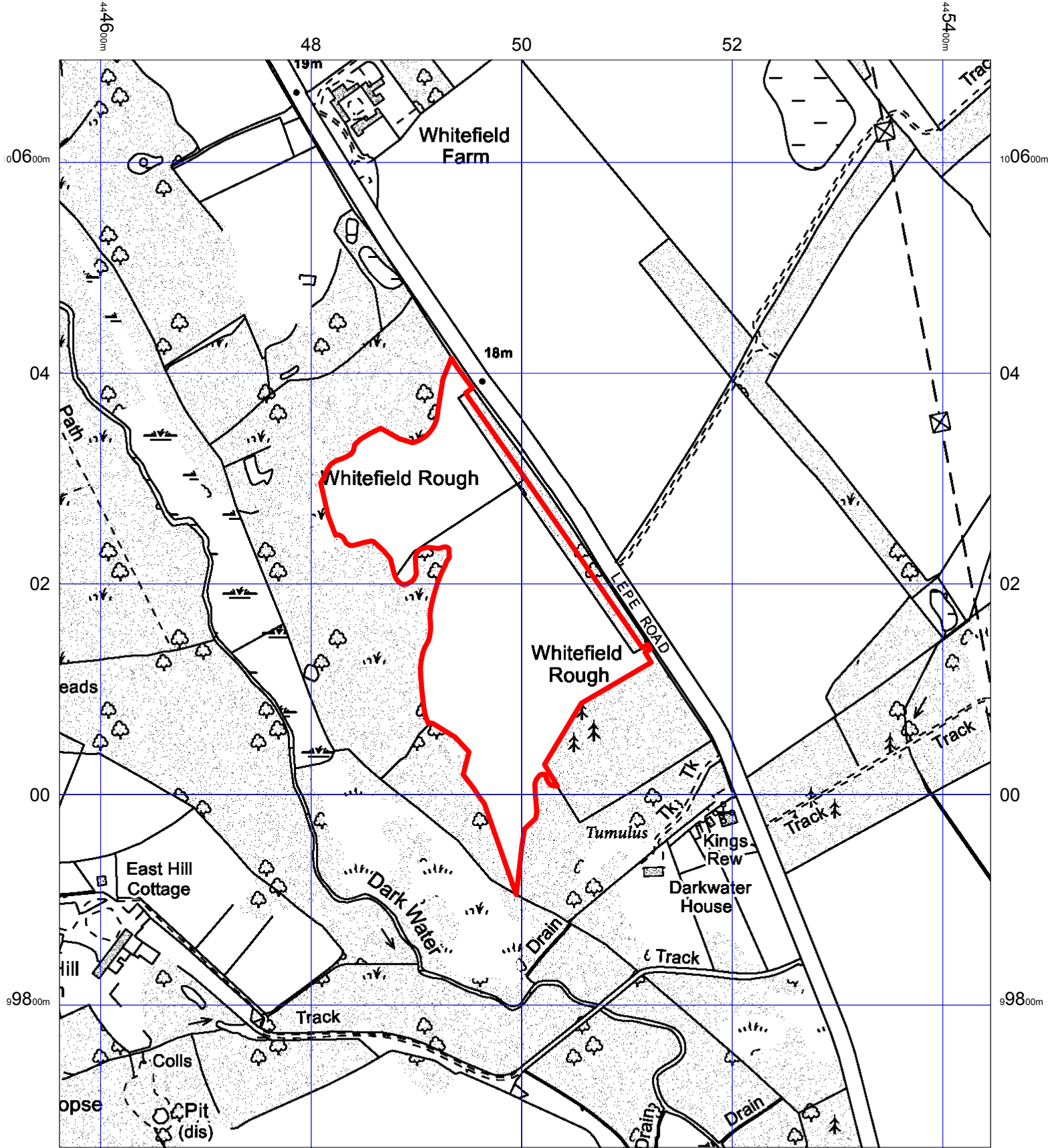
12. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

Reason(s)

- 1 The proposed development would result in the introduction of a tourism related business use in the New Forest National Park, outside any of the defined New Forest villages in the open countryside detrimental to the rural character of the New Forest National Park. The proposal would not form part of a farm diversification scheme and the application fails to demonstrate how it would contribute towards the understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest National Park without harm to the Park's special character. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies DP1, CP8 and CP16 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (December 2010) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The proposal would result in a new residential use in the open countryside of the New Forest National Park to which no justification has been provided. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CP12 and CP8 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (DPD) (December 2010) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3 The proposed development would have a harmful impact upon the tranquility and visual amenity of the locality and result in the proliferation of buildings within the open countryside which would erode the Park's local character resulting in the gradual suburbanising effect to the detriment of the special qualities of the National Park. The structures would appear incongruous in their setting being of a poor design to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area and the wider landscape. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies DP1, DP6, and CP8 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (December 2010) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4 No information has been submitted to demonstrate that adequate measures would be put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the ecological integrity of the New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Solent SPA. Therefore there would be insufficient information to assess the potential impact upon the SPAs and the proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policy CP1 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management

Policies (DPD) (December 2010), the Development Standards SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework. Furthermore, insufficient information has been submitted with the application to determine that the proposal would not have harmful impact habitats and species of biodiversity importance contrary to policy CP2 of the New Forest National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (December 2010) DPD and the National Planning Policy Framework.



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