



TO: Planning Committee South
BY: Development Manager
DATE: 21 February 2017
DEVELOPMENT: Regularisation of timber bridges
SITE: Blacklands Farm Wheatsheaf Road Henfield West Sussex
WARD: Henfield
APPLICATION: DC/16/2522
APPLICANT: Mr Grahame & Neil Goodridge

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: At the discretion of the Development Manager

RECOMMENDATION: To permit the application

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

1.2 The application seeks full planning permission to retain 2 bridges that have been erected over a pond to the north-east section of the site.

1.3 Bridge 1 connects the eastern and western fields and extends to a length of 21m and a width of 2.4m. Bridge 2 connects the western field to an island within the pond, and extends to a length of 9.8m, and a width of 0.8m. Both bridges are built of untreated timber, with mulch laid along both entrances to provide vehicular access over the bridge.

1.4 It is stated within the supporting documentation that the bridges are required in order to access the back fields of the site for agricultural and maintenance purposes.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

1.5 The application site is positioned to the north of Wheatsheaf Road, outside of any designated built-up area. The bridges subject to the application are positioned to the north-east of the site, with the surroundings characterised by open countryside. The fields are bound by hedging and post and rail fencing, with the site subject to use as a formal campsite and agricultural use.

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICY

- 2.2 **National Planning Policy Framework:**

NPPF1 - Building a strong, competitive economy
NPPF3 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy
NPPF7 - Requiring good design
NPPF11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
NPPF14 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICY

- 2.3 **Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015)**

HDPF1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
HDPF2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
HDPF10 - Rural Economic Development
HDPF11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities
HDPF25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
HDPF26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
HDPF32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
HDPF33 - Development Principles
HDPF43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

RELEVANT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 2.4 **Henfield Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 – 2035**

Following a court decision on 13 October 2016, Henfield Neighbourhood Development Plan has been quashed. The Parish Council is currently considering how they will move forward. Henfield Parish continues to be covered by the Horsham District Local Plan, and this plan remains the current and up to date plan for the area.

PLANNING HISTORY

HF/36/49	Pig sties	Application	Permitted	on
		08.02.1950		
HF/92/61	Site for house for own occupation	Application	Permitted	on
		03.01.1962		
HF/67/88	Erection of warehousing and light industrial units.	Application	Refused	on
		31.08.1988		
HF/2/96	Erection of pig buildings	Application	Permitted	on
		26.03.1996		
HF/37/00	Certificate of lawful use for storage of caravans	Application	Refused	on
		25.07.2001		
HF/122/02	Continued use of land and buildings for b1 and b8 uses	Application	Permitted	on
		13.08.2003		
HF/123/02	Certificate of lawful use for storage of caravans	Application	Permitted	on
		17.09.2003		

DC/08/1909	Provision of caravan and camping site for a maximum of 75 pitches in Field 1, erection of a toilet and washing facilities building and retention of farm office and camping reception office and additional landscaping.	Application 09.04.2009	Permitted	on
DC/08/1910	Retention of existing caravan and camping site for a maximum total of 100 pitches, consisting 50 in Field 1 and 50 in Field 2. Replacement of existing toilet and washing facilities and retention of existing farm office and camping reception office and additional landscaping	Application 03.12.2008	Refused	on
DC/09/0873	Retrospective application to change the use of former farm buildings B1 (Business) and B8 (Storage and distribution) uses	Application 16.07.2009	Permitted	on
DC/10/0811	Retrospective change of use of approved B1 light industrial unit and retention of existing office and restroom for use by VW Kampers Ltd in connection with their business at Blacklands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, Henfield, West Sussex	Application 22.06.2010	Permitted	on
DC/13/0532	Construction of 6 log cabins for use as holiday accommodation	Application 23.07.2013	Permitted	on
DC/16/2517	Regularisation of toilet and shower blocks and reception and ancillary camp site shop building associated with Blacklands Farm Campsite	Application 09.01.2017	Permitted	on

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

3.1 N/A

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

3.2 N/A

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.3 Parish Council Consultation: No Objection.

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

- 4.1 Article 8 (Right to respect of a Private and Family Life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of Property) of the Human Rights Act 1998 are relevant to this application, Consideration of Human rights forms part of the planning assessment below.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

- 5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

- 6.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the retention of 2 x timber bridges that have been erected over the pond within the site.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 Policy 26 states that development outside of built-up boundaries must be essential to its countryside location, and in addition meet one of the following criteria: support the needs of agriculture or forestry; enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; provide for quiet informal recreational use; or enable the sustainable development of rural areas.
- 6.3 The bridges subject to the application are positioned over the main pond within the site, to the north-east of the main field of the established campsite. It is stated within the submitted Planning Statement that the surrounding fields are used for agriculture to graze sheep and make hay in the spring, with the field to the west of the pond used for camping 28 days in each year (for which no planning permission is required).
- 6.4 Bridge 1 extends over the pond, providing access between the fields to the north-east. It is stated within the supporting information that the bridge is essential to its countryside location as it provides access on a daily basis in order to undertake checks of the sheep and farmland, whilst also providing an ease of movement that limits the need to traverse around the pond. The supporting documentation further states that Bridge 2 provides pedestrian access to an island within the pond, with access required to maintain vegetation as well as the resident mink population without having to hire a boat or waders.
- 6.5 Whilst it is noted that the farm still has over 100 sheep grazing the land, with hay produced from the fields, the wider site has diversified from its initial agricultural use. Since 2008 the wider site has been lawfully used as a formal campsite, which under planning approval DC/08/1909 was given permission for 75 tent and caravan pitches, with a further 6 woodland log cabins subsequently permitted under planning reference DC/13/0532.
- 6.6 The applicant considers that the erected bridges are essential to its countryside location in order to provide access and ease of movement for daily agricultural needs. It is recognised that the bridges allow for access and movement between fields, this is though considered desirable rather than essential given the other access means provided around the site. In addition, given the recent diversification of the site the direct requirement for the bridges and the agricultural need is limited.
- 6.7 As such, whilst the need for the bridges to support the agricultural undertaking is of some weight the bridges would also most likely be used in connection with the camp site. Currently, the campsite comprises a permanent field to the south-east of the bridges, a number of adjoining fields used for 28 days of the year under permitted development rights, with a current application (ref: DC/16/2915) seeking to permanently expand the operation

to the adjoining field to the south of the pond. The potential to provide access across the pond not only for agricultural needs but also for recreational purposes linked with the campsite is therefore considered to be significant.

- 6.8 Whilst direct access to the agricultural fields under the applicant's ownership would improve efficiency and manoeuvrability around the site, direct pedestrian and vehicular access to the northern fields, and the surrounding public footpaths/bridleways, would further enhance the facilities and accessibility of the camp site, as well as providing improved recreational access to the countryside. It is therefore considered that the retention of the bridges for both agricultural and recreational purposes would be beneficial to the function and use of the site and wider countryside as a whole.
- 6.9 The existing campsite provides recreational opportunities to the wider area, and is considered to be a sustainable form of development that contributes to the local rural economy. The ability to access the western field on a regular basis, for both agricultural and recreational needs, would support the agricultural undertaking, but also the sustainable development of the rural area. Therefore, the retention of the timber bridges for both agricultural and recreational use is therefore considered to accord with policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Character of the site and landscape character of the wider surroundings

- 6.10 Policies 25, 32 and 33 promote development which is of high quality and design, and is sympathetic to the distinctiveness of the dwelling and surroundings. Development should protect, conserve and enhance the landscape character, taking account of the nature environment, landscape and landform pattern to which it forms a part.
- 6.11 The bridges are of an untreated timber construction, with a timber bannister provided to the edges. These are considered to reflect the rural landscape character of the area and are of a scale which is in keeping with the wider landscape and surroundings. As such, the form and finish of the bridges are considered to accord with policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties

- 6.12 Policy 33 states that development should consider the scale, massing and orientation between buildings, respecting the amenities and sensitivities of neighbouring properties
- 6.13 Given the nature and location of the bridges, in the context of adjacent properties and uses of land, the bridges are not considered to have a material impact upon the amenities and sensitivities of neighbouring properties, in accordance with policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Conclusion

- 6.14 The timber bridges are considered to be acceptable in principle, and are considered to be of a form and appearance that relate sympathetically to the rural character of the area. The bridges are not considered to materially harm the amenities of neighbouring properties. As such, the development is considered to accord with Policies 25, 26, 32, 33 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To permit the application.