

Westfield Farm, Normanby: Proposed Touring Caravan Site.
Design, Access and Planning Statement.

1. Background. The Bell family has been at Westfield Farm for generations. Until recently they had a dairy herd but after a serious injury in 2012 when Graham Bell was attacked by a bull he has had to sell the herd. He now rears beef but they give a lower return and he needs additional income. He wishes to diversify and after carefully considering various options has decided on touring caravans.

2. The Bells accordingly submitted a pre-application enquiry to the Council for a 50-pitch touring caravan park with an amenity block and landscaping (reference number 13/00124/PREAPP). They received a favourable response by letter, dated 23 July 2013. The Council made some suggestions which have been followed.

3. This statement describes the proposal in detail and then discusses the various planning considerations including Design and Access at paragraphs 12 and 15 respectively.

4. The site. Westfield Farm is south of the village of Normanby and west of the River Seven. It currently has 170 acres (about 69 ha), all pasture. There is a complex of farm buildings (some substantial in size) and dwellings. Existing vehicular access is from Westfield Lane to the north to the farm buildings. The caravans would be in part of a flat field, No. 4400, which has an area of 12.22 ha and established hedges on all sides. The area of the caravan site itself would be about 7.5ha.

5. The proposal. The Bells chose a caravan site above other forms of diversification as they consider that it would be a successful business. They can offer a pleasant rural location likely to be appreciated by visitors from built-up areas. They have fishing rights in the River Seven and can offer the attraction of angling. The village pub, the Sun Inn, serves meals and is in walking distance. The visitor attractions of Ryedale and elsewhere in North Yorkshire are accessible.

6. A total of 50 caravan pitches would be spread out along the north and south sides of the field. Between them would be dug a pond about 300m long with an island in the middle. Each caravan pitch would be a generous 45m wide and 20m deep. There would also be a play area. It would be seasonal.

7. A single storey service building would be provided at the east end, near the farm buildings. It would contain an office, information room, showers, toilets, a laundry and stores. Materials would be timber cladding walls and a timber shingle roof. Dimensions would be 30m x 9m, and about 4.8m high.

8. A new access would be made from Westfield Lane direct to the site, parallel to and about 100m west of the existing farm track. It would be about 200m long and 5m wide. A lay-by or waiting area could be provided in the wide highway verge near the entrance to help traffic flow on the lane.

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9. Mature hedges 1.5-2m high bound the field on all sides with also a line of trees along its eastern boundary. At the Council's suggestion supplementary tree planting will be planted soon (before spring) along the hedges. Additionally a 30m planting screen is proposed on the northern side of the site and one of 10m on the south.

10 Planning Evaluation. The Council's letter of 23 July 2013 identified the following planning policies as being relevant.

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), March 2012.
- The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism, DCLG, May 2006.
- The Ryedale Local Plan (March 2002), Policies TM3, TM4, ENV7 and ENV18.
- The Emerging Ryedale Plan, Policies SP8 ('Tourism') and SP14 ('Biodiversity'). To these I have added SP9 ('The Land-Based and Rural Economy'), SP13 ('Landscape') and SP17 ('Managing Air Quality, Land and Water Resources').

The emerging Ryedale plan was formally adopted on 5 Sept thereby superseding the written policies of the previous Ryedale Local Plan, but not yet its Proposals Map.

11 I shall now look at the following issues:

- A: Design and impact on the landscape.
- B: Access.
- C: Impact on residents.
- D: Economic considerations including farm diversification.
- E: Flood Risk.
- F: Biodiversity.

Most of these issues were identified in the Council's letter.

12 Issue A: Design and Impact on the Landscape. The service building, described at 7 above, would be of pleasing and appropriate design and materials. It would not be easily seen against the adjoining substantial farm buildings. As also described previously, at 9, the site is already well screened by hedges, trees and flood banks. Generous further planting is intended.

13. The site would not be easily visible from any nearby public viewpoints.

- From Barugh Lane to the east, part of the well-used route between Kirkbymoorside and Malton, the site is screened by high flood banks each side of the River Seven and the trees on the field's eastern boundary.
- From Westfield Lane to the north, leading to Salton, the existing hedges and proposed further planting would provide good screening.

There are no footpaths or bridleways affected in the immediate vicinity. I understand that the only house the site would be clearly visible from is Hill Top Farm, over 500m away to the north: a considerable distance.

14. Local Plan Policy SP8 (Tourism) supports the provision of appropriate facilities in the open countryside including touring caravans if they do not

have "an unacceptable visual intrusion and impact on the character of the locality". By Policy SP13 (Landscapes), "the Council will carefully consider the impact of development proposals "on locally-valued landscapes including the Vale of Pickering. The site is well screened and both policies' requirements are met.

15. Issue B: Access. The proposed new access is described at paragraph 8. It will meet Westfield Lane on a straight stretch with good visibility. A lay-by is offered to accommodate waiting traffic. No problems are anticipated.

16. Issue C: Impact on Neighbours. There are two semi-detached houses on Westfield Lane about 250 metres from both the farm and the proposed site. The residents have been shown the plans. The new access will keep traffic away from them. It is not anticipated that they would be disturbed. The dwellings at Westfield Farm are occupied by the applicants and family members who do not object. Other dwellings are further away, in the village. Overall no adverse impacts on neighbours are anticipated.

17. Issue D: Economic Considerations. The farm now has a beef herd of 250 fat cattle, compared to 150 dairy cows plus 150 followers previously. Income has gone down significantly and the farm has to diversify. Mr Bell needs less strenuous work after being seriously injured by the bull. He would concentrate on the caravans. This would create the need for a replacement job on the farm, which unlike the caravans would be year-round.

18. Such diversification accords with the Council's Policy SP9, which supports "*appropriate farm and rural diversification activity*". Further, the NPPF advocates economic growth and job creation in rural areas and the diversification of agriculture (para 28).

19. The proposal also accords with the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism, which recognises the local value of tourism and that the revenue it generates can help to aid diversification within the rural economy (2.4-5).

20. Issue E: Flood Risk. The site is identified in the Ryedale Local Plan as being within the "Approximate Extent of Area Liable to Flood". However the vicinity is protected by very high and substantial flood banks along the River Seven. Mr Bell says that the field has not ever flooded in his time on the farm.

21. A comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment dated May 2013 has been submitted with the planning application. It was prepared by Mr Phil Fisher of Cundalls, a qualified and very experienced local drainage expert. As part of the preparation Mr Fisher met an officer of the Environment Agency on site.

22. The Assessment confirms that the site is in the High Risk Probability Zone 3. However it adds that the area is protected by the substantial flood bank on either side of the river and that "*Flood water has never affected either the farmstead or nearby land at Westfield Farm*". The report makes a number of recommendations. It concludes that, provided these are

incorporated, *"it is considered that there will be no flood risk with the proposed caravan site location, neither will the development increase the risk of flooding elsewhere"*.

23. The proposal accords with Policy SP17 of the new Ryedale Plan, which requires flood risk to be managed in order to avoid areas where flooding is probable. It also meets the requirements of the NPPF to avoid development in flood areas (para 103).

24. Issue E: Biodiversity. Although policy SP14 was raised by the Council, there is no known special ecological interest in the site, a grass field which has been re-seeded.

25. Conclusion. The Bells wish to diversify with the proposed touring caravan site at their farm for economic reasons. It is already well screened and will be more so with the proposed generous supplementary planting. No problems concerning access, impact on neighbours, flooding or effect on wildlife are anticipated. We hope that the application will be approved.

Pat Sutor, BA, Dip TP, MRTPI
Planning Consultant for Mr and Mrs Bell.

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