

## REPORT TO THE SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2012		
<b>Application Number:</b>	S/2012/00468/Full		
<b>Site Address:</b>	Cholderton Charlies, Amesbury Road, Cholderton, Salisbury. SP4 0EW		
<b>Proposal:</b>	Proposed retention of three mobile homes (two of which to be re-sited) for a temporary period and their use as staff accommodation in connection with the tourist attraction business on the site and new fencing.		
<b>Applicant / Agent:</b>	Mr Tony Allen		
<b>City/Town/Parish Council</b>	Cholderton Parish Council		
<b>Electoral Division</b>	Bulford, Allington & Figheldean	<b>Unitary Member</b>	Cllr John Smale
<b>Grid Reference:</b>	Easting: 420983		Northing: 142334
<b>Type of Application:</b>	Minor		
<b>Conservation Area:</b>	Cons Area: - NA		LB Grade:- NA
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Mr Andrew Bidwell		Contact Number: 01722 434381

Reason for the application being considered by Committee:

Councillor Smale has requested that the application be determined by Committee due to the relationship to adjoining properties

### 1. Purpose of report

To consider the above application and to recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions.

### 2. Report summary

The main issues in the consideration of this application are as follows:

The appropriateness of countryside location and impact on the countryside. Staff accommodation and need, design siting and scale.

The application has generated no comments from the parish council; no indications of support and 3 letters of objection from the public.

### 3. Site Description

The site lies between the villages of Cholderton and Amesbury close to the A303 within the Special Landscape Area. There are currently two tourist related businesses on the site. The former dwelling on the site is used as a Youth Hostel with the remainder of the site utilised as a Rare Breed's farm with ancillary attractions. Both uses operate year round. There is also an education (schools) business which operates on the site.

The site is located to the south of the road and a small group of residential properties exist to the north east.

### 4. Relevant Planning History

Application number	Proposal	Decision
S/2003/1036	Temporary siting of two Log Cabins and one Mobile Home for Staff accommodation.	Approved 10/03/03
S/2003/1157,	Replacement Visitor Centre building erection of extension to main building and change of use of main building to Youth Hostel	Approved 27/10/04

## 5. Proposal

This proposal is a temporary solution to retain existing staff on site whilst longer term plans for the business derived from the intensification of both uses are considered. The longer term plans could result in applications for the following types of development:

- Change of use of restaurant/shop associated with the farm to hostel dining/break out space
- Extension to this existing building to form 4 additional hostel bedrooms
- Erection of a replacement restaurant/shop/visitors centre on Farm site
- Erection of an operator's/manager's dwelling linked to the tourist facilities on the site
- Erection of permanent staff accommodation to replace a number of existing temporary buildings
- Change of use of existing education block to a "day nursery"
- Additional buildings for display of animals and for education use
- Covered walkways to link existing and proposed buildings

The applicants have previously requested pre – application advice and have been formally advised by officers in regard to the above suggested long term proposals. The advice of officers was that support would be unlikely for new permanent staff accommodation on this site and therefore, in order to keep operations running on site, a further temporary permission is sought for staff accommodation.

## 6. Planning Policy

Central Government Guidance:  
Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF) part 3 Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

Saved policies of the Salisbury District local plan (which are also 'saved' policies in the adopted South Wiltshire Core strategy

- G1 – (Sustainable development)
- G2 –(General Principles)
- C2 – (Development in the Countryside)
- CN21 – (Archaeology)
- T2 – (Tourist attractions in the countryside)

## 7. Consultations

### Parish Council

No comments have been received to date.

### Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services

Comments relating to need for satisfactory access for fire engines, adequate water

supplies and appropriate fire safety measures as well as the encouragement for the provision of domestic sprinklers.

### **Wiltshire Council Archaeology**

Previously commented on a pre-application consultation for the site, the works proposed in this application are unlikely to disturb significant archaeological remains

### **South Wiltshire CPRE**

The temporary homes should have been removed in 2008 – a condition of the previous permission for temporary buildings. This was not carried out. The applicant indicated that the LPA Officers are unfavourable towards a permanent dwelling (presumably because the farm is not fully agricultural or, forestry), but does not explain or suggest how a further temporary permission might be resolved in the future. However, residential on-site would save commuting. Nevertheless, on-site accommodation in rural areas is not to be encouraged unless a cast –iron case can be made around agriculture, forestry or tourism.

## **8. Publicity**

The application was advertised by site notice, and neighbour consultation.  
3 x letters of objection raising the following issues:-

- What assurance will be made that they will only be occupied by staff?
- Visitors particularly at night cause noise disturbance to neighbours and animals
- Flags at the front of the site create a theme park look
- The units should have been removed in 2008
- The original permission was for staff accommodation whilst the main building was extended
- Planning regulations have already been flouted
- Since the intensification of the site with the diversification of the business neighbouring cottages have suffered increasing adverse effect on their amenity

## **9. Planning Considerations**

- Appropriateness of countryside location and impact on countryside
- Staff accommodation and Need
- Design / Siting and Scale
- Impact upon amenities of neighbours

### **9.1 Appropriateness of location and impact on countryside**

The site is outside the housing policy boundary of Cholderton and is therefore located in the countryside in planning policy terms. Policy C2 states that development in the countryside will be strictly limited and will not be permitted unless it would benefit the local economy and maintain or enhance the environment. Policy C6 says that within the Special Landscape Area, proposals for development in the countryside will be considered having particular regard to the high quality of the landscape. Where proposals which would not have an adverse effect on the quality of the landscape are acceptable, they will be subject to the following criteria:

- The siting and scale of development to be sympathetic with the landscape; and
- High standards of landscaping and design, using materials which are appropriate to the locality and reflect the character of the area.

The rare breeds farm and hostel uses are already established and this proposal will assist in intensifying these uses. This relatively minor proposal is not considered likely to increase the number and length of vehicular based journeys and therefore (on the face of it) does not represent an unsustainable pattern of development. Furthermore, the site already receives significant vehicular trips as a result of its tourist attraction function. The proposal therefore will not result in a demonstrable increase in visits and usage of the facility over that which already occurs.

The rare breeds farm represents an important visitor attraction within the district. This proposal is likely to assist an opportunity to improve and consolidate the economic base of the rural tourism business. Saved Policy T2 says In the countryside, proposals for the development of new tourist attractions or the improvement of existing ones, will be considered against the following criteria:

- Within the AONB or the landscape settings of Salisbury and Wilton, proposals will only be permitted where they are small in scale and would be compatible with the special landscape quality of the area
- Otherwise proposals will be allowed provided they do not entail the erection of large buildings or structures.

This proposal will see the existing visible mobile homes that are in a poor state of repair – just inside the hedge alongside the road – removed and replacements relocated within the existing cluster of buildings. As a result a notable visual improvement will follow and it is therefore considered that this proposal would not be contrary to policy in terms of its impact on this countryside location.

## **9.2 Staff Accommodation / Need**

The business operations on site employ a considerable number of staff both full time, part time and also on a seasonal basis. Given such staffing needs and requirements a planning application was granted in 2003 for the temporary retention of two log cabins and a mobile home to house staff on the farm and this application was also renewed in 2005 (S/2005/750).

These permissions limited occupation to people employed full time in the businesses on site and a further condition required the removal of these buildings by the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

The buildings have however remained in situ since their original approval in 2003 and have now been on site for some 8 years.

A formal pre-application submission was made to the Council in late 2011, which amongst other matters sought a building for permanent staff accommodation by the various full time members of staff to replace the existing temporary buildings.

The applicants advise that high quality staff is key to the successful business /tourist operations on this site and the provision of onsite accommodation is especially important to the onward success of the business.

This proposal is for accommodation for full time members of staff. However, should accommodation be required at the end of the requested 2 years period the applicants will be required to demonstrate the need and benefit for the development proposed at the time. There must be a clearly established existing need that relates to full time workers and the enterprise must be financially sound.

Whilst it is accepted that the previous planning permission recognised there was an established need and allowed staff accommodation and a managers flat, in regard to this specific proposal it is unclear whether there continues to be such need particularly one that would justify further permanent staff accommodation buildings. As such either refusal or, temporary permission is the only viable option from a planning point of view at this time.

### **9.3 Design / Siting / Scale**

The proposed buildings are considered to be typical in design terms. Elevations and roof treatment will be coloured profile sheeting. The buildings will be single story and a new close boarded timber fence will be erected around the immediate site containing the accommodation. Due to the location of the buildings they will be barely perceptible from any nearby public vantage point, and from the wider surrounding countryside, will be seen against the backdrop of the cluster of existing farm buildings. As such the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of design and scale.

### **9.4 Impact upon amenities of neighbours**

In answer to the concerns raised by neighbours, it is accepted that the current situation is unacceptable and any breach of planning permission has potential to cause nuisance. However the main concerns raised relate to the wider site issues generally and not all specifically to this proposal. Issues of concern are currently under investigation by reason of this proposal and following site visits by members of the enforcement team. For example, the matter raised to do with the flag poles at the front of the site has been investigated. The result of the investigation is that these are national flags, and as such do not result in a breach of planning permission as the flags and their poles are permitted development.

## **10. Conclusion**

The negative elements arising from the site's planning history, relatively isolated location and the clear policy objectives to avoid unsustainable developments, need to be balanced against the desire to retain and support an important tourist site with local employment and educational benefits.

It is clear that the applicants wish to expand their business in the near future. On this basis it is considered that in the absence of any clear demonstrable harm being attributed to this proposal specifically, and as the proposal will significantly improve the current situation in visual amenity terms, there is no clear planning reason to oppose this application for temporary permission.

It is nevertheless important to consider this application as an opportunity for Wiltshire Council to regularise a current breach of planning permission. Permission would be for a temporary period of two years at the end of which, the buildings should be removed and the site restored to its former condition. This will be a condition of the permission and in the event that this does not happen and in light of the current breach and enforcement history, it is highly likely that rapid action for the removal of the buildings would be considered expedient.

Furthermore, in granting permission the applicants will have a sufficient amount of time to thoroughly consider which options for expanding this rural attraction could be realistically pursued.

## **11. Recommendation:**

**Planning permission be GRANTED for the following reason:**

The removal of the two dilapidated Log Cabins together with the proposed temporary retention and location on the site of the mobile homes for staff accommodation, are considered to represent a significant visual improvement resulting in no demonstrable harm to the immediate site, neighbours and the wider surrounding countryside. As such the proposal is considered to be in general accordance with the aims and objectives of saved policies G1, C2 and T2 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan which are contained within Appendix C of the adopted South Wiltshire Core Strategy, and with the Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF) parts: 3 Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy.

**Subject to the following conditions:**

1 The occupation of the mobile homes shall be limited to a person solely or mainly employed in the business occupying the site.

REASON: The site lies within an area where planning permission would not normally be granted for development unrelated to the essential needs of the established business.

POLICY – G1 – General principles for development, C2 – Development in the Countryside, T2 – Tourist attractions in the countryside.

2. The mobile homes hereby permitted and any ancillary works or structures shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: Permission has been granted on a temporary basis to establish whether there is a functional need for permanent on site residential accommodation in relation to the agricultural tourism enterprise on the site.

POLICY – G1 – General principles for development, C2 – Development in the Countryside, T2 – Tourist attractions in the countryside.

3. This decision relates to documents/plans submitted with the application, listed below. No variation from the approved documents should be made without the prior approval of this Council. Amendments may require the submission of a further application. Failure to comply with this advice may lead to enforcement action which may require alterations and/or demolition of any unauthorised buildings or structures and may also lead to prosecution.

Drawing ref.no. APL/01 Site Location Plan  
Drawing ref.no. CFc/p01a Site Plan as Proposed  
Drawing ref.no. CFc/p/10 Block Plan as Proposed  
Planning Design and Access Statement

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt.