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Ribble Valley Borough Council
Development Control
Council Offices Church Walk
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 2RA

Our ref: NO/2012/104466/01-L01
Your ref: 3/2012/0910

Date: 08 November 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

**BRIDGE HEYWOOD CARAVAN PARK, DUNKIRK FARM, WHALLEY ROAD,
READ, LANCASHIRE, BB12 7RR - PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FOR
THE SITING OF 15 NEW STATIC HOLIDAY CARAVANS IN PLACE OF THE
STORAGE AREA WHICH WILL BE RELOCATED.**

Thank you for consulting us on this proposal. The Environment Agency OBJECTS to the proposed development (as submitted) on grounds of flood risk. We are also recommending that if the application were to proceed to an approval at some stage in future, conditions could be attached to protect biodiversity and the watercourse(s).

The site is located in Flood Zone 3a on the Agency's Flood maps, meaning that the site is at high risk of flooding. Therefore, the sequential test outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") should be applied. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary it should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

The applicant should work in partnership with Planning Officers to investigate whether there are any alternative sites which are more suitable (i.e. less at risk of flooding). If this assessment process has not been carried out, the current proposal should not be progressed until this stage is completed. If, following a proper assessment it is not possible for the development to be located in zones with a lower probability of flooding, the Exception Test may apply (if appropriate as indicated in para 102 of the NPPF).

Environment Agency position

We object to the application and recommend refusal of planning permission on the basis that the proposal is at risk of flooding:

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Reasons (flood risk)

The site lies within Flood Zone 3a defined by the Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework and has a high probability of flooding. Despite the mitigation measures proposed, the risk to life and/or property, within the development from fluvial inundation would be unacceptable if the development were to be permitted.

1. The proposed development does not have a safe means of access and/or egress in the event of flooding and no alternative option for managing the safety of people has been provided as part of the application. Consequently, there would be an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the occupants in a flood event.
2. There is a risk that occupants of the caravans could be at risk from rising floodwaters, especially during the night.
3. The proposal includes siting caravans within 8 metres of the watercourse and would be unlikely to receive Environment Agency consent for the works because it would restrict essential maintenance and emergency access to the watercourse. The permanent retention of a continuous unobstructed area is an essential requirement for future maintenance and / or improvement works. Based on the information available it is unlikely the development can proceed as proposed.

Overcoming our objection

You can overcome our objection by submitting evidence to demonstrate that the proposal will not pose risk to life and property as highlighted above.

To be more resilient against flooding, the site area located within the floodplain would need to be raised by at least 600mm above the floodplain level and compensatory flood storage provided elsewhere on the site. There would also need to be a programme for maintenance to show that the watercourse flowing through the site would be cleared of debris on a regular basis.

The proposal would need to be amended to omit any works proposed to be carried out within 8 metres of the watercourse to maintain a clear and unobstructed means of access to the river.

Please would you ensure that we are re-consulted on any relevant further information submitted and should the applicants or agents wish to discuss this position with us, they should contact James Jackson on 01772 714134

Advice to applicant

The River Calder adjoining the site is designated a main river and is therefore subject to Land Drainage Byelaws. In particular, byelaw no. 7 states that no trees or shrubs may be planted, fences, buildings, pipelines or any other structure erected within 8 metres of the top of the bank of the watercourse without the prior written Consent of this Agency. In this particular case it is essential that this 8 metre strip is preserved.

The Environment Agency has a right of entry to the River Calder by virtue of Section 172 of the Water Resources Act 1991, and a right to carry out maintenance and improvement works by virtue of Section 165 of the same Act. Development within the 8 metre area would be likely to impede this Right of Access.

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We have no objection from a biodiversity point of view and we support a number of the recommendations in the 'Ecological Survey MAB Environment & Ecology 2012.' Parts of the site have natural habitat value which could be protected and improved.

In particular, a minimum of 3 metre wide riparian woodland buffer strip could be created to separate the areas of development from the adjacent watercourse. Additionally, a 6 metre wide woodland buffer could also be marked out along edge of the woodland and leaving to regenerate naturally. This will have benefit to local wildlife by creating an owl hunting area. The strip could be mown occasionally (approx. every 1 to 3 years) to prevent scrubbing over, but should be allowed to grow tussocky grasses.

In all cases, it would be important to ensure that the proposed works are compatible with the Agency's need for access to the watercourse and that any works obtained the relevant consents as described above.

If you have any questions about our letter, please contact us.

Yours faithfully

Dan Matthewman
Planning Officer - Sustainable Places

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cc G V A Grimley