

Application Number:	WP/20/00588/FUL
Webpage:	https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/
Site address:	WATERSIDE HOLIDAY PARK, BOWLEAZE COVEWAY, WEYMOUTH, DT3 6PP
Proposal:	Use of land as year round holiday park.
Applicant name:	Mr Main
Case Officer:	Emma Telford
Ward Member(s):	Cllr Ferrari and Cllr O'leary

This application is referred to committee in line with the Scheme of Delegation consultation process at the request of the Service Manager.

1.0 Summary of recommendation:

1.1 Grant, subject to conditions.

2.0 Reason for the recommendation:

- The location is considered to be sustainable and the proposal is acceptable in its general visual impact.
- There is not considered to be any significant harm to neighbouring residential amenity.
- There are no material considerations which would warrant refusal of this application.

3.0 Key planning issues

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of Development	The principle of extending the holiday occupation season to allow holidays at any time of the year is acceptable in principle.
Visual Amenity, Setting of the Heritage Coast and the AONB	The proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the characteristics of the area's landscape.
Residential Amenity	The proposal would not have unacceptable effect on residential amenity by reasons of noise, light or disturbance.
Highway Safety	It is considered that the proposal would not present a material harm to the transport network or to highway safety.
Biodiversity	The proposal would not result in a significant adverse impact on biodiversity.

4.0 Description of Site

4.1 The application site is Waterside Holiday Park which is accessed off Bowleaze Cove way to the south. Opposite the holiday park to the south are a number of leisure and retail developments fronting Bowleaze Cove Beach, residential properties of Bowleaze Cove way and the Riveria Hotel. Surrounding the holiday park in all other directions are open, agricultural fields.

4.2 The eastern boundary of the site immediately adjoins the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Heritage Coast.

5.0 Description of Development

5.1 This application seeks to remove seasonal occupancy restrictions from the site to allow for all year-round occupation. The supporting information sets out that parts of the site predate both planning and Caravan Sites Act legislation with the site expanding in various areas over the years. As a result some areas are not subject to seasonal occupancy conditions under planning legislation and some are.

6.0 Relevant Planning History

85/00113/FUL – Formation of concrete bases and provision of mains drainage to 83 caravans – Approved.

91/00533/FUL – Use of land for touring units (Touring Caravans/Motorhomes/Tents) – Approved.

93/00355/FUL – Revised area of static caravans and associated landscaping – Approved.

02/00656/COU – Change of use of part of field for siting of static caravans – Approved.

WP/17/00922/FUL - Erection of 24 safari tents instead of 28 tents permitted under WP/14/00153/FUL (revised scheme to include 4no. 4 bed safari tents and provision of hot tubs to units 8-24). – Approved.

WP/19/01005/FUL - Change of use of field for stationing of Cedar Lodges (falling within the definition of a caravan) on the remaining 14 pitches instead of safari tents. – Approved.

WP/20/00756/FUL – Extension and improvements to Waterside Holiday Park, comprising use of land for the siting of timber lodges for holiday use, outdoor recreation and play areas, associated access and parking, landscaping planting and infrastructure. – Approved

7.0 List of Constraints

Outside of a Defined Development Boundary

Setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Setting of the Heritage Coast

Setting of World Heritage Site

Setting of Heritage Assets

South Dorset Coast SSSI

Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC

Right of Way

8.0 Consultations

All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website.

Consultees

8.1 Weymouth Town Council – The Council objects to the application for a permanent use of land for a year-round holiday park but recommends that it goes forward as temporary use-of land for a year round holiday park, in line with current government guidance regarding temporary extensions.

8.2 Highways – The Highway Authority considers that the proposals do not present a material harm to the transport network or to highway safety and consequently has no objection.

8.3 Environmental Health – No comment.

8.4 Housing Technical Officer – We do resist the application for year round opening on the grounds of difficulty in enforcing conditions where occupation is allowed all year round. We accept that Waterside Holiday Park is a professional company and Dorset Council and its predecessor have received very few complaints in the last ten years however the planning permission is granted for the land and not the company and future concerns must be considered for the site licence standards.

8.5 Countryside Access Team – No objection to the proposed development. However, throughout the duration of the development the full width of the public footpath must remain open and available to the public, with no materials or vehicles stored on the route.

8.6 Wessex Water – Our priority is to ensure we meet the regulatory service standards for our household customers at all times. The network monitoring measures we have in place record this local network meets these OFWAT service standards at our customer's stop taps.

To reiterate, as statutory water supplier in this area we have a duty to provide water supplies when we receive a request.

- To get a new or increased water connection for commercial purposes the holiday park applicant will need to agree terms and conditions, including the costs with Wessex Water.
- If it is the applicants intention to apply for an increase in their flow rate, or upsizing of their water connection, then as a business customer under the governments 'open water' policy, this application would be made through their water retailer.
- When considering a request for a commercial supply Wessex Water will make sure first and foremost that we can meet and maintain all existing service levels and potential demand for domestic supply purposes.

- Consequently, Wessex Water is entitled to recover from the commercial applicant, the reasonable costs of making the connection and any necessary network reinforcement required to accommodate the commercial demand, whilst maintaining our regulatory service levels to our existing domestic customers.

8.7 Growth and Economic Regeneration Team – It is really in the hands of the park operator to know whether it makes financial sense to open in the winter, but in terms of general trends I think the general increase in the thermal performance (heating and insulation) of holiday accommodation, the rise in popularity of hot tubs, the temporarily reduced opportunities to go abroad, the increase in cost and quality of holiday caravans/chalets/lodges, the moves to more flexible working patterns making weekends away easier, and the ever-growing population of retired people not subject to the time restraints of school and work holidays have all helped increase the demand for out-of-season holiday accommodation.

From a tourism and economic development perspective, increasing demand for shoulder and out of season tourism has long been a strategic aim, as it increases tourism revenue, encourages the substitution of seasonal jobs with year-round jobs, and doesn't put the strain on infrastructure and congestion that peak season demand can bring. The increased demand could justify improved year-round bus services on local routes, improving sustainable transport for residents and workers, too.

All of this could be achieved with no impact on the landscape.

Colleagues in Housing are better placed to comment on any concerns about what safeguards are effective to prevent holiday accommodation being used as housing, but holiday parks open year-round are definitely more common than they once were.

8.8 Natural England – Natural England has no comments to make on this application.

Representations received

8.6 In total forty-four responses were received in response to the application, forty-three objecting to the proposal and one in support. The reasons for objection are summarised below:

- Many of the caravans on the site are sold, not owned and let by the site owners.
- Some owners are already living on the site continuously for 46 weeks of the year, which rather than provide employment and expenditure to the local area by a constant turnover of holidaymakers, instead increases the strain on local services.
- Opens the park to becoming a full-time residential site by default.
- Chaotic state of the traffic on Bowleaze Coveaway.
- Traffic Management Plan is required for the site.
- Noise disturbance year-round.
- No outdoor entertainment between 11pm and 10am.
- A permanently open site is a breach of the local plan policy.

- The current opening periods were to reflect an acceptable balance between resident disruption and economic activity. Nothing substantive has changed in this balance.
- Extension of disruption for residents.
- Up to 46 weeks permitted opening to be more than enough to ensure the viability of the company.
- Danger of it becoming a holiday park in name only.
- It would increase the likelihood of the area becoming a long-term or permanent home for many people, outside the development boundary.
- The site is permitted in its location due to it being a holiday park only.
- Would turn it into a low grade housing estate.
- Residents have been aware of the use of the site during the holiday season however the use of the site for year-round occupation has never been an option/considered.
- Increased inappropriate traffic, noise and night lighting.
- Impact fragile heritage coast, the climate and the environment.
- Will not bring significant benefit to the local economy.
- A temporary situation does not justify a permanent change.
- An extended winter occupancy with central heating, extra lighting, hot meals cooked and hot showers and the site's heated communal areas and pool with have a negative impact.
- It is not sustainable tourism and runs counter to environmental objectives.
- Permission for year round of the cedar lodges can not be used in support as it involved 14 newly built cedar lodges rather than 500 or more older caravans.
- Cannot be compared to a hotel as the Waterside site is capable of accommodating visitor numbers in their thousands.
- Any significant economic benefit will be to the site as opposed to the other businesses in Weymouth.
- Detrimental impact on Weymouth Town Centre through competition to local Weymouth hotels.
- Desire to standardise occupancy across the site however the whole site should be standardised to the minimum March- January occupancy.
- Drastic reduction in water supply during the summer months, the winter period is a period of respite and cannot be expected to put up with a year round depletion of the supply.
- Extended winter occupancy will result in massively increased burning of fossil fuels and the resulting CO2 emissions but it will also result in increased car use. Winter visitors are less likely to cycle and spend less time on the beach.
- Extra boot-fall on the cliffs in winter can only have a negative impact.
- Increased water-use resulting from extended occupancy is also not environmentally sustainable.
- Extension to occupancy results a year-round increase in traffic and air pollution.
- Winter period offers respite from litter, fumes, congestion, noise, anti-social behaviour for residents.
- Would set a precedent for all other holiday parks in Weymouth.
- Bus would then run in the winter which often causes difficulties with the traffic as it is too big for the road.
- Nature needs a rest from the disturbance for part of the year as well.

- Economic argument is weak and does not outweigh the needs of the local community and constant pressure on the landscape.
- Only approach road, Bowleaze Cove way is barely adequate to handle the current traffic flow.
- Highway safety concerns, road safety has to be a prime consideration in allowing the holiday season to continue throughout the year.
- Longer-term permissions will adversely impact the fragile Jurassic coast and nearby AONBs.
- Winter period gives residents some respite.
- With the closure of 2 months in a year it ensures the accommodation cannot become fully residential.
- The accommodation and the site is only appropriate for seasonal occupation.
- Encourage additional visitors to an area which is already prone to erosion through overuse during the winter when wet weather is likely to make the coast more likely to suffer erosion.
- Extension to year-round will turn them into permanent homes without the benefit of private amenity space or privacy normally required for housing developments.
- Covid-19 should not be used as an excuse to permanently open the park longer.
- Traffic along Bowleaze Cove way is excessive even in quieter periods.
- Little done to control parking and once past the hotel, double parking is the norm, frequently blocking driveways and making access difficult.
- Holiday park has become noisier with more outdoor events using large loudspeakers.
- Local flora and fauna will have no winter recovery time.
- Land instability concerns.
- The 2000 caravans do not pay local rates yet have been contributing impact to sewage, water and all relevant infrastructure.
- Important to give the area a break from the high number of visitors.
- This is an area of outstanding natural beauty.
- The local area will lose its identity.
- Effect the local hotel trade that is struggling for business.
- Negative visual impact on the natural green fields coastline environment.
- Loss of habitat for wildlife in the area particularly deer.
- Infrastructure of the area would not cope with the extra demand.
- Application does not ring-fence or identify section 106 contributions to alleviate the low water pressure caused by the development.
- Insufficient demand from non-owners during the closed period to warrant all year opening.
- To ensure the park remains a holiday park a closed period must be retained.
- Has the potential to put an increased demand on local medical services.

8.7 The reasons for support are summarised below:

- Will create job creation and tourism.
- Financial benefit to the town.
- Substantial investment into Weymouth.

9.0 Relevant Policies

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan

INT 1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
ENV 1 – Landscape, Seascape and Sites of Geological Interest
ENV 4 – Heritage Assets
ENV 5 – Flood Risk
ENV 7 – Coastal Erosion and Land Instability
ENV 10 – The Landscape and Townscape Setting
ENV 12 – The Design and Positioning of Buildings
ENV 16 – Amenity
SUS 2 – Distribution of Development
ECON 7 – Caravan and Camping Sites
COM 7 – Creating a Safe and Efficient Transport Network
COM 9 – Parking Standards in New Development
COM 10 – The Provision of Utilities Service Infrastructure

Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan - In preparation – limited weight applied to decision making.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

2. Achieving sustainable development
4. Decision-making
6. Building a strong, competitive economy
12. Achieving well-designed places
14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Other material considerations

Weymouth & Portland Urban Design (2002)
Landscape Character Assessment (Weymouth & Portland)
Dorset AONB Landscape Character Assessment
Dorset AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

10.0 Human rights

Article 6 - Right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - Right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 Protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted Development Plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the Human Rights of the applicant or any third party.

11.0 Public Sector Equalities Duty

As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have “due regard” to this duty. There are 3 main aims:-

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

The positioning of car parking spaces generally close to the holiday accommodation would assist the elderly or less able users of the units.

12.0 Financial benefits

Material Considerations

Additional employment on-site due to the extended period of usage.

Likely increased winter period visitor spending in local shops and facilities.

13.0 Climate Implications

The proposal would not alter the number of units on the site. The additional two months would result in potentially more traffic movements and servicing vehicles and activity increasing emissions during the winter like the use of heating of the units. However, this increase which would be likely be similar to the existing normal operating use pattern and is considered to be outweighed by the benefit of allowing winter holiday breaks with potential for spending by users in local shops and facilities out of season.

14.0 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

14.1 This application relates to a well-established holiday park. The supporting information sets out that some parts of the site predate both planning and Caravan Sites Act Legislation. The site has expanded in various areas over the years and as a result some parts of the site are subject to seasonal occupancy conditions under planning legislation and some are not. This application seeks for the whole of Waterside Holiday Park to have no seasonal occupancy conditions and be able to be used all year round.

14.2 Aerial photographs submitted show caravans mainly along the field boundaries in 1947 and then a large extent of static caravans on the site in 1972. The applicant considers that these original parts of the park are unrestricted by any planning conditions (as distinct from licensing ones) as to season of use. The eastern slope areas are covered by planning permission 4/93/0355F which does not include any seasonal occupancy conditions. The area south of the former touring field was granted for a change of use of part of field for siting of static caravans under the reference 02/00656/COU. This permission includes a seasonal restriction condition which requires no tent to be occupied between 15th January and 1st March in any one year.

14.3 Planning permission was granted for 28 safari tents on the former touring field on the north-eastern parcel under the reference WP/17/00922/FUL. This permission included a restriction that no tent shall be occupied between 15th January and 1st March. However, planning permission was granted in 2020 under the application WP/19/01005/FUL for holiday lodges on 14 of the 24 safari tent pitches which did not include a seasonal restriction. A seasonal restriction was not considered necessary as a condition would be placed on the units to be holiday accommodation only which would prevent them being used as a person's sole residency and the lodges would be located on the site all year round so reducing the time they could be occupied would not change the visual impact of the units.

14.4 The site lies outside of any defined development boundary (DDB) in the Local Plan. Policy ECON 7 of the Local Plan gives the context for new, or changes to existing caravan and camping sites, and allows for this type of development outside DDB's subject to other material planning considerations. In this case the site is already in existence and does not include any additional units.

14.5 NPPF para 84 supporting a prosperous rural economy sets out that decisions should enable: 'sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside'. This application seeks to extend the period of holiday usage for the full calendar year – the red line of the application site does not include the north-eastern parcel where the safari tents and holiday lodges are located. The Growth and Economic Regeneration Team were consulted on the application and considered there had been an increased demand for out-of-season holiday accommodation for a number of reasons. They also advised that from a tourism and economic development perspective, increasing demand for out of season tourism has long been a strategic aim, as it increases tourism revenue, encourages the substitution of seasonal jobs with year-round jobs, and doesn't put the strain on infrastructure and congestion that peak season demands can bring.

14.6 Planning permission was also recently granted at planning committee for an extension to the holiday park under the reference WP/20/00756/FUL for the siting of 31 lodges (falling under the definition of caravans) and outdoor recreation. This permission does not include a seasonal restriction condition. It was considered that such a condition was not necessary as it would include a holiday accommodation only condition to prevent the units becoming a sole residence and the year round use of them would provide support to the local economy.

14.7 Third party concerns have been raised questioning how if allowed for 12 months it can be ensured the holiday use does not become permanent residential use. Planning conditions would be applied to limit the use to holiday purposes only, and to require the operator to maintain a schedule of occupiers which can be checked by an authorised Dorset Council officer. Clearly, it would be open to the LPA to take enforcement action if there were breaches of the authorised use of the units. In light of the above it is considered that the principle of extending the holiday occupation season to allow holidays at any time of the year is acceptable in subject to conditions and subject to any other relevant planning considerations.

14.8 The red line of the application also includes various ancillary facilities such as the main facilities complex (including pools, admin and reception, sales area) and a small site maintenance building. As these ancillary uses are included within the red line of the application they would also benefit from year round use if the application were granted and any previous planning conditions for these uses would also need to be reimposed on any permission granted. Consideration has been given to the planning history of the site and there is not considered to be any conditions that need to be reimposed and the ancillary buildings would serve the proposed year round use of the site.

Visual Amenity, Setting of the Heritage Coast and the AONB

14.9 The application site is Waterside Holiday Park. The coastal strip to its south forms part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, the higher ground to its north and east lies within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the land to its west and south forms part of the Heritage Coast and the proposed development site and surrounding fields are identified as land of local landscape importance within the Local Plan. The site is therefore in a visually sensitive location. However, the application seeks year-round use of the existing accommodation of the site. The accommodation is located on the site all year round and therefore the use of it all year round is considered to be acceptable and would not have a significant adverse impact on the characteristics of the area's landscape.

Residential Amenity

14.10 The existing holiday park clearly entails activity and movements of people and vehicles, together with the movements of servicing and delivery vehicles. Third party concerns have been raised regarding increased noise and disturbance in the winter period. Whilst it is true to say this may result in an increase in noise and activity at the site in mid-winter for local residents, the level of any noise and disturbance resulting from an extension to the full year is likely to be no greater than that at present. There are a number of residential properties located adjacent to the site on Bowleaze Coveaway. However, it is not considered that the extension of use from 10 to 12 months would have an unacceptable effect on residential amenity by reasons of noise, light or disturbance.

14.11 Third party concerns have also been raised regarding the impact of the proposal on water pressure in the area. Wessex Water were consulted on the application and were made aware of the concerns raised. Wessex Water explained that their *priority is to ensure we meet the regulatory service standards for our household customers at all times. The network monitoring measures we have in place record this local network meets the OFWAT service standards at the customer's stop taps.* Wessex Water go on to advice that *when considering a request for a commercial water supply Wessex Water will make sure first and foremost that they can meet and maintain all existing service levels and potential demand for domestic supply purposes.*

Highway Safety

14.12 This application seeks permission for use of the existing holiday park all year round for holiday accommodation. The proposal does not include any alterations to the site or its access. Concerns have been raised by third parties regarding highway safety and the impact of year round use of the site on road safety. Highways were consulted on the application and considered that the proposal would not present a material harm to the transport network or to highway safety and therefore raised no objection.

Biodiversity

14.13 The application is for the year round use of the existing holiday park. The proposal will not result in any alterations to the holiday park and the units are not currently removed from the site when not in use. The proposal will therefore just extend the period of use of the units for an additional two months. The application did not include the submission of a Biodiversity Plan however given the nature of the proposal it was not considered necessary. Biodiversity net gain measures have also recently been secured under the granted planning permission WP/20/00756/FUL for an extension to the holiday park for the siting of lodges which included additional planting within the existing park. The application site is located in close proximity to the SSSI and the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC. The proposal will result in an increase in visitor numbers however it is not considered to result in a significant increase given the above. Natural England were consulted on the application and raised no comments on this application. Therefore, there is no requirement for the Council to undertake an Appropriate Assessment in this instance.

15.0 Conclusion

15.1 The extension of the holiday occupation period from 10 months to the full 12 months of the year would allow greater flexibility and/or opportunity for taking holidays out of the main season. It would also mean the whole of the site would have the same level of occupancy allowed throughout. This is a sustainable development as it is already existing in this location. From an economic viewpoint it could result in economic benefits to local facilities in the otherwise quieter winter months. In environmental terms the units are already located on the site all year round.

16.0 Recommendation

Grant, subject to conditions.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Location Plan

Site Plan – drawing number 2020 19 01

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: This condition is required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

3. No more than 539 holiday caravans shall be stationed on the land within the red line as shown on the site plan, drawing number 2020 19 01.

Reason: To ensure that the density of the units is not increased thus impacting on the visual amenity of the site and local area.

4. (i) The lodges/caravans shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and

(ii) The lodges/caravans shall not be occupied as a person's sole, or main place of residence;

(iii) the owners/operators must maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all owners/occupiers of the lodges/caravans on the site, and of their main home addresses, and must make this information available at all reasonable hours at the request of a duly authorised officer of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that approved holiday accommodation is not used for unauthorised permanent residential occupation.