

Conditions And Reasons for refusing application 17/08/00127

- 1** The site is located outside of any defined development boundary, in the open countryside. The countryside is to be protected for its own sake, for the benefit of all. In such areas development is very strictly controlled and only permitted in exceptional circumstances where essential. The site adjoins the designated Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a landscape recognised as being of considerable scenic quality. The application site is open, greenfield land in a highly sensitive location adjoining the AONB and adjacent to a major visitor route through the district. The change of use from agricultural land to a large caravan and camping site, including permanent lodges, plus the erection of a substantial facilities buildings would have a significantly adverse landscape impact. The nature of the caravans and lodges is such that they would be incongruous and unnatural, alien features within this landscape. The site is largely open on its roadside boundary and highly visible from publicly accessible vantage points particularly on the elevated land of the adjoining Mendip Hills and as such landscape character and scenic quality of the Strawberry Belt would be substantially harmed by this alien feature. Furthermore the setting, and public views into and out of the AONB would be substantially harmed. The proposal is contrary to Policies STR3, CNE2 and CNE17 of the Sedgemoor District Local Plan and Policies STR6, Policy 5 and Policy 23 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, the advice set out in the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary and Planning Policy Statement 7.
- 2** The application site is on land designated as Grade 2 agricultural land which is land classified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as 'very good'. Paragraph 28 of Planning Policy Statement 7 advises that such land should be protected and development affecting such land should only be granted if there is an overriding need for it. It has not been demonstrated that the need for the development overrides the agricultural importance of the land and it has not been demonstrated that land of a lower agricultural grade is unavailable. The proposal is contrary to Policy 7 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and Planning Policy Statement 7.
- 3** The proposal is contrary to Policy 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, since the proposed development derives direct access from the A371 County Route and no overriding need or benefit has been substantiated for the proposed development on this specific site.
- 4** The site is located outside any recognised development limits, where it is remote from adequate services and facilities. The development, if approved, will increase the reliance on the private car and foster a growth in the need to travel, contrary to the advice contained within PPG13, RPG10 and the provisions of policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review.

5 The use of the access to the site in conjunction with the development . proposed would be likely to increase the conflict of travel movements on the A371 County Route resulting in additional hazard and inconvenience to all road users.