



Northumberland County Council

City Hall
Morpeth
NE61 2EF

05/01/2023

22/04609/REM | Reserved Matters application for Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and scale for Phase 2 - Outline planning permission for a further 475 hard standing bases for holiday homes, landscaping and cafe on approved hybrid application 17/04330/FUL | Land East Of Widdrington Moor Widdrington Northumberland

Dear Planning Officer,

These comments are further to our letter dated 23/12/2022, having now had time to assess the application in its entirety. We have a number of concerns regarding this application, given its location adjacent to our West Chevington Wilding Site.

Our concerns are primarily around the proposed density of the second phase, and its proximity to our wildlife site. At the current density and proximity, there is increased likelihood of impacts spilling out from the development site and onto our landholding. Therefore, we would welcome a revision of the layout to decrease the density, and provide a greater buffer between the units and the boundary.

This is particularly relevant given that another application for a further caravan site has gone in at land adjacent to the above (22/04582/OUT), leading to significant cumulative impacts. In fact, if both these plans are approved, the wider area (including Seddon's Caravan Park) will go from the current level of <100 holiday pitches to >1,100, an increase of over 1000%.

By reducing the density of the current proposed layout, there will also be opportunity to provide corridors of natural habitat for wildlife movement through the site. Currently, the most southerly and easterly segments of units block east-west movement through the site, and removing these areas would vastly improve connectivity.

We are also concerned about the opportunity for ingress from the caravan site on to our land. Whilst there are PRoWs due to be reinstated, and these will permit access, we would like that access to remain controlled. Particularly, NWT is concerned about the ability for dogs to cross the boundary and disturb wildlife. As such, we would ask that the developers please introduce



dense screening planting between the units and the site boundary in order to impede access. We recognise that there is a wish to maintain the open nature of the landscape, but this open landscape will have little biodiversity value if wildlife is to be disturbed by the visible presence of dogs and humans. Screening planting will also serve to limit the impacts of any light spillage, though lighting has not been detailed at this stage.

Drainage is not being addressed as part of this reserved matters application, but NWT does think that some thought should be given to drainage as part of the landscape plan. The surface run-off from the land at Widdrington is already causing issues downstream, with the Steads Burn experiencing incising erosion, and reedbeds on the Chevington Burn becoming silted. It would therefore be of benefit to consider the introduction of SUDs basins etc. into the landscape plan in order to hold water on site, and consider how to slow the flow of water off-site using landscaping to address these issues.

NWT is also worried about the proximity of the proposed 9-hole golf course to our land. It is likely that some stray golf balls will unfortunately find their way over the boundary and onto our land, where they could pose a hazard to wildlife, livestock, staff, volunteers and/or equipment. In addition, golf courses tend to be managed via the use of herbicides and other chemicals, which may drift and damage the habitat on our land.

In the context of the wider landscape, NWT would consider it appropriate for the developers to commit to a fully-native planting schedule for landscaping, in order to prevent the escape of any non-native species from the site. The Trust is happy to advise on appropriate species if necessary, as we have worked with parks in the past to develop native ornamental species lists. Additionally, the proposed species-rich grassland and wildflower meadows should make use of commercially-available Northumberland-native seed mixes where possible.

Given our above concerns, at this time NWT is **objecting** to the proposed development in its current form. If there are any questions about our response, then please do not hesitate to get in touch. NWT would ask that the Trust please be re-consulted if/when further information is made available.

Kind regards,

Alice McCourt
Conservation Officer
Northumberland Wildlife Trust

