

Application No:	3/37/17/007
Parish	Watchet
Application Type	Full Planning Permission
Case Officer:	Bryn Kitching
Grid Ref	Easting: 306694 Northing: 143472
Applicant	Mr Michael Stevens
Proposal	Change of use of land from residential to the siting of two caravans for tourism use.
Location	Land to the west of West Bay Park, West Street Watchet, TA23 0BJ
Reason for referral to Committee	The views of the Town Council are contrary to the recommendation.

Recommendation

Recommended decision: Grant

Recommended Conditions

- 1 The use hereby permitted shall be for a limited period being the period of 3 years from the date of this decision. The caravans shall be removed from the site on or before 15 December 2021 in accordance with a scheme of work that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of public safety and to allow for future review of land stability and cliff erosion.

- 2 There shall be no more than two caravans located on the site in the positions shown on drawing number PP003 Rev A- Proposed Site Plan.

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

- 3 Prior to its construction, details of the proposed access road through the site, including the method of construction and drainage, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The access road shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of land stability.

- 4 Prior to the occupation of the caravans hereby permitted, a land stability and cliff erosion management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of the future monitoring, maintenance and management of the land as well as warning and evacuation plan for occupants of the proposed caravans.

Reason: In the interest of public safety and to ensure ongoing monitoring of land stability and cliff erosion.

- 5 The caravans shall be occupied for tourism purposes only.

The caravans shall not be occupied during the months of November through to February (inclusive).

The caravans shall not be occupied as a person's sole or main residence.

The site operator or owner shall maintain an up to date register of the names of all owners/occupiers of individual caravans on the site and of their main home addresses, and the duration of their stay and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent permanent occupation of the residential units and in the interests of land stability risks.

Informative notes to applicant

STATEMENT OF POSITIVE WORKING

In determining this application the Local Planning Authority considers it has complied with the requirements of paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Although the applicant did not seek to enter into pre-application discussions/correspondence with the Local Planning Authority, during the consideration of the application concerns were raised in respect of land stability. The Local Planning Authority contacted the applicant and sought amendments to the scheme to address this issue/concern and amended plans were submitted. For the reasons given above and expanded upon in the planning officer's report, the application, in its revised form, was considered acceptable and planning permission was granted.

Proposal

The application is for the change of use of land from residential to site two caravans on land to the west of West Bay Park Watchet. During the processing of the application, a geotechnical inspection and report has been submitted with a plan to show the position of the proposed caravans and the access track, parking and turning areas. Two parking spaces are shown for each caravan.

Site Description

The site is immediately to the west of West Bay Park and is accessed via the existing access to the caravan park off Cleeve Hill. The site is a narrow piece of land that is boarded by Cleeve Hill on the south side and the cliff top to the north. There is an existing vacant residential unit on the site known as Saxons Croft. This is proposed to be removed as part of the application.

West Bay Park is a permitted caravan park that contains 16 park homes (which fall within the legal definition of caravans). It is understood that the operators of the site have restricted it to over 50's with a permanent residential use.

Relevant Planning History

Case Ref	Proposal	Decision	Decision Date
3/37/87/033	CHANGE OF USE TO FORM EXTENSION TO ADJACENT CARAVAN PARK	Grant	04-Sep-87
3/37/83/010	USE OF LAND FOR SITING OF TOURING CARAVANS	Refuse	11-Mar-83
3/37/87/068	RETENTION OF USE FOR SITING OF THREE CARAVANS	Grant	17-Dec-87
3/37/98/004	CHANGE OF USE OF 2 TOURING PITCHES TO 1 STATIC HOLIDAY CARAVAN PITCH. CONTINUED USE OF CHALET AS LAUNDRY ROOM & INFO AREA	Grant	13-Feb-98
3/37/03/054	CHANGE TO ALL YEAR ROUND HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION	Grant	21-Nov-03
3/37/10/017	CHANGE OF USE FROM HOLIDAY CARAVAN SITE TO RESIDENTIAL CARAVAN SITE WITH NEW LAYOUT INCORPORATING DRAWINGS RECEIVED 16/8/2010 & WEST BAY CARAVAN PARK COASTAL EROSION REPORT DATED MAY 2008 - AS AMENDED BY DRAWING NO 1565.1B	Grant	08-Nov-10

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Consultation Responses

Watchet Town Council - Due to the ambiguity of the planning application, and the instability of the land i.e. how close it is to the cliff edge, the Committee would recommend refusal.

Highways Development Control – no comments received

Economic Regeneration and Tourism – no comments received

Biodiversity and Landscaping Officer - This unique sloping coastal site is prominent in the landscape. Its mainly open nature allows glimpsed views of the sea.

The three units with parking will disrupt these views and give the appearance of the town of Watchet extending further to the west.

Environmental Health Officer (KR) – (comments prior to submission of Geotechnical Inspection Report)

Whilst I have a great understanding of the issues, concerns and the mechanics of the coastline, (in particularly this stretch) I am not qualified to give direction on this.

Planning, the proposer and the objector will need to check the information publicised on the EA website which will give a direction of indicators.

The facts;

- Not hold the line
- EA indicate an average erosion rate of 0.5 of a metre per year, (50 centimetres) in this area
- Coastal erosion is a natural process and cannot be stopped

Sorry I cannot give a professional opinion.

Environment Agency – no comments received

Representations Received

14 letters of objection have been received which raise the following issues

- This site is used as a residential park homes site for the over 50s. It is not a caravan or mobile home site.
- People have bought properties on this understanding.
- Access through the site is poor.
- It is a quiet place and holiday accommodation would be disruptive.
- Noise and disturbance.
- No towing caravans or trailers should be allowed.
- More people will walk through the park.
- The environmental impact of disturbance or change will have a negative effect on the condition of adjacent cliffs
- The coast is a SSSI.
- Concerned about coastal erosion.
- Road is dangerous and congested.
- Not enough space for parking.
- No objection to park coach for over 50s..

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for the West Somerset planning area comprises the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032, retained saved policies of the West Somerset District Local Plan (2006) Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015) and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below.

West Somerset Local Plan to 2032

SC1	Hierarchy of settlements
SV1	Development at primary and secondary villages
WA1	Watchet Development
CC4	Coastal Zone Protection
EC8	Tourism in settlements
NH9	Pollution, contaminated land and land instability

Retained saved policies of the West Somerset Local Plan (2006)

TW/2	Hedgerows
TO/4	New Tourism Accommodation in Watchet

Determining issues and considerations

Principle of Development

The site lies within 50 metres of the contiguous built up area of Watchet which is defined in the local plan as a rural service centre where new development will be concentrated. Policy SC1 states that in areas such as this site, development will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that:

- A. It is well related to existing essential services and social facilities within the settlement, and;
- B. There is safe and easy pedestrian access to the essential services and social facilities within the settlement, and;
- C. It respects the historic environment and complements the character of the existing settlement, and;
- D. It does not generate significant additional traffic movements over minor roads to and from the national primary and county highway route network
- E. It does not harm the amenity of the area or the adjoining land uses.

The majority of services and facilities for potential tourism accommodation is in the centre of Watchet which is approximately 500m from the application site. There is continuous built form and urban development along the whole of the route between the site and the centre of Watchet (along West Street). In terms of the relationship between the site and services/facilities, it is considered that the development is well related and passes part A of policy SC1.

The route along West Street from the site to the services in the centre of Watchet has pedestrian footway along the first 200m. The next 100m to the London Inn has intermittent footway and pedestrians would need to walk on the road for this section. The remainder of the route to the centre has footways. The consideration of whether this results in safe and easy pedestrian access needs to take into account that this is one of the main walking routes into Watchet for all residents West of the London Inn and that vehicle speeds along the stretch of road without footways are relatively slow. It is considered that people would choose to walk this route rather than drive. On this basis, the proposal is considered to pass part B of policy SC1. The character of the area is development on both sides of West Street with temporary style buildings and uses on the northern side (being car parking and static caravan/mobile home type buildings) and a more permanent type construction on the south side. The placement of two additional caravans on the northern side of the road would complement the existing character of the area and passes part C of policy SC1.

Access to the site would be through the existing West Bay Caravan Park which has a wide access directly onto the main road. To get to and from the national primary and county highway route network, it would not be necessary to use minor roads and therefore there is no conflict with part D of SC1.

In terms of visual amenity, the proposals would not cause any harm but it is necessary to consider residential amenity. There have been a number of objections received from residents of West Bay Park for which a number relate to the site

management agreements of the park homes being used for permanent accommodation for the over 50's. These are not planning restrictions and are not a requirement of the local planning authority. The concerns of local residents relate to the use of the site for tourism accommodation and the noise and disturbance that could be created by occupiers of the proposed accommodation, particularly if they have children. There could also be disturbance from people arriving and leaving the site in vehicles that would have to be driven through the existing access and park home site. It is considered that although the proposals would intensify the use, it is unlikely to result in such an adverse impact on residential amenity that it was causing planning harm. Holiday accommodation and residential accommodation often operate in close proximity to each other and noise and disturbance (and any behavioural issues) are in the control of the site management that is outside of the planning system.

Benefits of Tourism

Watchet is a significant tourism destination with hotels/guest houses, esplanade, marina, steam railway and coast. The provision of additional tourism facilities within the town would benefit the local economy through additional spending. This weighs in favour of the proposals and needs to be given positive weight in the decision making process.

Coastal Change

Watchet and the land to the west is an area that is susceptible to coastal erosion and change. Due to previous occurrences of cliff erosion in the immediate vicinity, officers requested the submission of a geotechnical inspection and report to consider the impacts of coastal erosion. A report has been submitted which identifies that the sea cliffs below the site are susceptible to active erosion and slippage which is likely to be ongoing and result in further cliff erosion. The most likely risk is ongoing local slips and erosion which would cause further cliff top regression over time, with instability most likely during and after severe winter storms. More major scale cliff failures are much less likely although possible.

The report also identifies that it is unlikely to be feasible to consider major cliff stabilisation or protection works, although local reinforcement and protection measures along the cliff top could arrest, delay or alleviate future instability problems and the loss of land along the cliff top as the cliff edge regresses over time.

The report is unable to give a definitive timeframe to the scale and consequence of land instability but includes a table which looks at the probability over time. As would be expected, the greater the length of time, the greater possibility there is of minor and major landslips. On this basis, any planning consents should be time limited and temporary so as to allow future review with monitoring, mitigation and management.

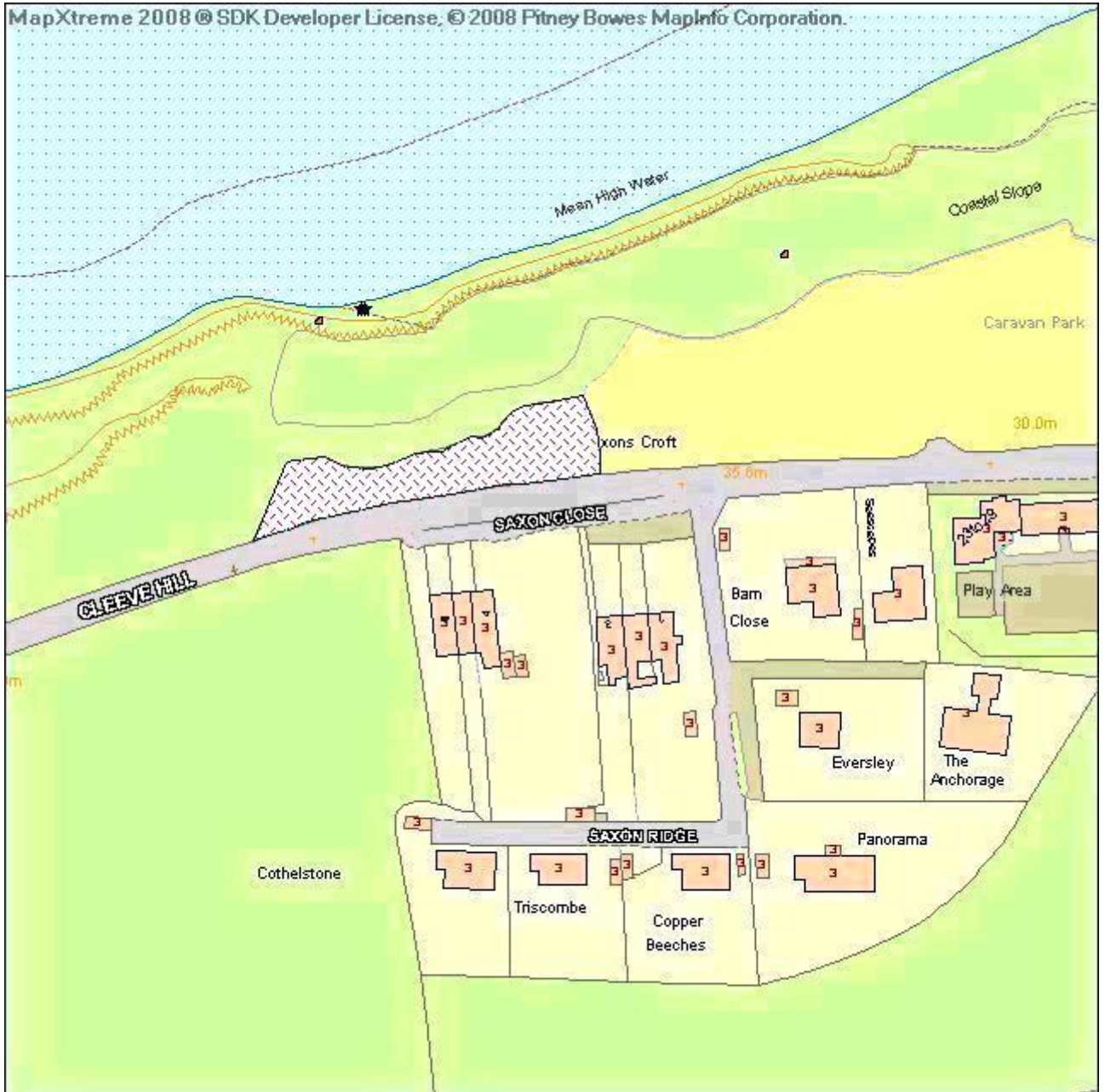
The report states that "there would clearly be risks associated with the ownership and development of this site which would be borne and accepted by the landowner". The report goes on to state that "it is difficult to provide convincing geotechnical evidence that the extension site would be stable for development in the conventional

sense. However, based on the foregoing findings and assessment, it is possible to demonstrate that the extension site should be suitable for the proposed development of mobile homes, as the most likely instability should be relatively minor in scale and could be mitigated and managed”

In addition to any consent being for temporary buildings for a limited period of time, the occupation of the buildings could also be controlled so that they are only used for temporary holiday (occupation rather than permanent residential) during period of the year when the risk of land instability is reduced. It would be possible to impose planning conditions requiring the accommodation to be kept empty during the winter months and/or also requiring the submission of a monitoring and emergency plan.

On the basis that the location of and buildings could be set as far back from the cliff edge as possible and conditions could control the occupation and length of any planning consent period, it is recommended that planning permission is granted.

In preparing this report the planning officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.



Application No 3/37/17/007
Change of use of land from
residential to caravan site
Land to the west of West Bay
Caravan Park, West Street,
Watchet, TA23 0BJ

Planning Manager
West Somerset Council,
West Somerset House
Killick Way
Williton TA4 4QA

West Somerset Council
Licence Number: 100023932

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Easting: 306526
Northing: 143419

Scale: 1:1250



