

## Colton Parish Council - Response to Application 7/2008/5668 - Stricely Fell Caravan Site

Colton Parish Council objects to this application for the following reasons:

### 1. Questions over the existing site and caravans:

a) History of the site: We understand from local knowledge that the local farming family who owned the site in the 1970s were given permission for 4 conventional static caravans on the understanding that there would never be more than 4 allowed, and that there was a formal covenant on the land to that effect. **The Council urges the LDNPA to check the history of the site, planning permissions and the existence of the covenant.**

b) The existing development is already extensive, with 3 very large slate-roofed 'caravans' that look like chalets and a 4<sup>th</sup> under construction (with the wooden floor apparently constructed in place). **The Council urges the National Park to conduct a thorough check that these buildings do in fact fall within the legal definition of a caravan.**

2. LDNPA Local Planning Policy NE5 'Quieter Areas': Stricely Fell falls within a designated 'quiet area' of the National Park. **The Council believes that this development contradicts this policy, which states that: "Development will not be permitted where it would cause and increase in traffic (see 5. below), material increase in the level of recreational use (see 6. below), or visual intrusion, noise and other disturbance (see 7. below)."**

3. LDNPA Local Planning Policy T9: Caravan Sites: **The Council fully supports the LDNPA policy statements under this heading:**

i) *"The circumstances within which additional static caravans may be introduced into the National Park should therefore be restricted to established sites, within their existing boundaries, where this causes no demonstrable harm or in small numbers in connection with appropriate farm diversification proposals."*

and

ii) *"The policies set out below seek to facilitate the development and enhancement of established static caravan sites to meet changing public demands and innovation in the industry, provided that in so doing the preservation of the natural beauty of the National Park is not compromised. In those instances where irreconcilable conflict arises between these two objectives, the duty of the NPA to safeguard natural beauty will always prevail."*

**The Council considers that the additional proposed caravans would cause harm to the landscape character of the area and would compromise the natural beauty of the National Park (see 4. below).**

4. Landscape and ecological impact: The applicant does not consider that there would be any impact on biodiversity of the area, and considers the landscape impact to be moderate. **The Council disagrees and considers that both the landscape and ecological/biodiversity impact of this proposed development would be high.** The Council does not have information on the formal conservation and ecological importance of this area. However, the Council considers Stricely Fell (where the area has not already been cleared for the existing caravans) to be an area of considerable natural beauty, landscape and conservation importance, and valuable habitat for wildlife, being an area of semi-natural mixed open woodland and scrub with open glades and rocky outcrops. It is also important in being accessible to the public via 2 footpaths for quiet enjoyment. This type of landscape is characteristic of this south lakeland area, but is under increasing threat. **The Council feels that it is exactly the sort of landscape that should be conserved in this quieter area of the National Park.** Given how the existing site has resulted in extensive scrub clearance, (some) tree felling and conversion of the footpath to a

shiller track for vehicles, the proposed development is likely to cause the same kind of damage to the natural beauty of the area. Wildlife is likely to suffer considerable disturbance from the proposed development.

5. **Increase in traffic:** The application states that there would be an additional 12 car-parking spaces and 80 two-way car trips. **The Council feels that this represents a large increase in traffic which is unacceptable**, both for the immediate area and for access via the unclassified UCR that serves the site. The 'quieter area' designation states clearly that "*development will not be permitted where it would cause an increase in traffic*".
6. **Increase in recreational use:** The 'quieter area' designation also clearly states that "*development will not be permitted where it would cause material increase in the level of recreational use*". This proposal could result in **more than a doubling of recreational activity and the Council feels that this is inappropriate**.
7. **Visual intrusion and disturbance:** **The site is highly visible to users of the 2 footpaths**, since they go right through the site. The existing development has already **entirely changed the experience of footpath users** from one of natural landscape beauty to a track between caravans and vehicles, **and the proposals will extend this change to most of the site**. Again, we note that the quieter area designation states clearly that: "*Development will not be permitted where it would cause visual intrusion, noise and other disturbance*".

Although the site is not highly visible from a distance, it is visible from a few high points in the Parish. Although the viewpoint photos in the application appear to indicate that the site is not visible on the road to Graythwaite from Crosslands, we are told that in fact the site IS visible from this road at the junction with the road to Thwaite Head.

8. **Access to the Site:** The Council has concerns about the Design and Access statement which proposes (4.3) that the section of the UCR from Force Mills to the site be surfaced and fitted with a flush kerb border. Although this particular section of the UCR is not in Colton Parish, surfacing of UCRs changes the character of an area and affects recreational use by pedestrians and horse-riders, for example, who have to deal with faster traffic. Kerbs are not a feature of the landscape in rural south lakeland and would give the road a suburban appearance.
9. **Concern over specific points in the application:**
  - a. Application form, section 10.: Under materials, all 8 categories are marked "Don't know".
  - b. Section 4.3 of the Design and Access statement talks about 'an additional 11 units' - it is unclear what this refers to, but it implies that further expansion is a possible aim.
  - c. Section 3.2 of the Design and Access statement states talks about the "demand for accommodation of this type" and the "necessity of the existing operation to evolve". We are not aware of any evidence for either statement and neither can we see any benefit to the local area.
  - d. We cannot see any reference to a tree survey in the application.

**Overall, the Council is very concerned about the type of precedent that this type of sizeable development could have in this quiet and sensitive part of the National Park, and sees no obvious benefit to the local economy.** We believe that if this development is allowed to go ahead, then it calls into question the purpose of National Park stated aims: "*to conserve and enhance the Lake District's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage; and promote the public's understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities.... to try to ensure that developments and activities are not harmful...*".