

HORSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Statement relating to proposed 'Pop Up Somerset' campsite

Horsington Parish Council is aware of a proposal to create a 'pop-up' campsite at Oak Tree Field, Cheriton Manor Farm, South Cheriton, Templecombe, Somerset BA8 0BJ. The Parish Council is also aware of the concerns of a number of parishioners in relation to the proposed campsite, particularly in relation to the additional traffic that the site may generate.

The Parish Council has elected to issue this statement to help clarify the facts regarding the proposed campsite and related issues that have been raised.

Is the proposed campsite legal and is planning consent required?

The proposed campsite makes use of a provision within the The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 which permits the use of land for any purpose for 28 days in any calendar year. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, on 25 June 2020, the UK Government temporarily amended the Order to extend the permitted usage to 56 days.

The proposed campsite falls within this permitted development and does not require any further form of planning consent.

What authority does the Parish Council have to prevent the proposal going ahead?

The Parish Council has no planning authority under any circumstances; planning decisions are taken by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) - in the case of our parish this is South Somerset District Council. In instances where planning consent is required, the LPA will seek the views of the Parish Council; the feedback we provide will be taken into account but is just one of a range of factors considered when making a planning decision. The final decision may therefore not reflect or include any recommendations made by the Parish Council.

In the case of the proposed campsite, there is no planning decision to be made since the consent is already provided under permitted development. The Parish Council therefore have no ability to influence any decision since there is none to be made.

What happens if the proposed campsite is occupied for more than 56 days?

In the event that the proposed campsite is occupied for longer than the permitted period, or if there is any other infringement of the provisions of permitted development, the LPA enforcement team have the power to investigate and may require an application for further planning consent, a certificate of lawful development or other site licensing to be made.

The UK Government guidance to LPAs however is to prioritise economic recovery and that they should not seek to undertake planning enforcement action which would unnecessarily restrict the ability of caravan and holiday parks to extend their open season. It is unlikely, therefore, that any action would be taken swiftly.

What can be done to reduce the impact of the traffic?

The Parish Council are acutely aware of parishioners' concerns about the additional traffic the proposed campsite may generate. We have therefore been working constructively with the operators of the proposed campsite to ensure that guidance is provided to guests requesting that they choose alternative routes to site wherever possible and drive with due care and attention to residents and other road users.

The Parish Council has also sought the guidance of Somerset County Council Highways team who are responsible for roads within our parish. We discussed two possibilities with the team:

- **A 20mph zone.** SCC Highways advised that the characteristics of the roads did not lend themselves to the creation of a new 20mph zone and therefore recommended that this approach was not pursued. The creation of a new 20mph zone requires a Traffic Regulation Order – a process which takes approximately 12 months and is not guaranteed to result in a positive outcome. The cost of pursuing this scheme would be approximately £5000 and would need to be borne by the Parish Council; such an amount is unbudgeted and represents more than half of the total annual budget of the Parish Council.
- **Additional signage or markings.** SCC Highways advised that additional signage or markings would only be considered in the event that the additional traffic volumes warranted it. Monitoring of traffic volumes once the proposed campsite was operational would need to be conducted to build the case for the additional signage or markings. SCC Highways advised that additional signage or markings are only ever provided in cases where a need can genuinely be demonstrated; additional signage and markings reduces the overall impact, including of existing provisions.

Could the Parish Council provide signage?

The Parish Council has no authority to erect any form of road signage; conversely any signage erected would be in breach of planning law.

There is already additional traffic from businesses operating at Cheriton Manor Farm. Is proper planning consent in place for those?

Planning law is an incredibly complex area and increasingly so. The proposed campsite is just one example of where permitted development means that formal planning applications that would come before the Parish Council for comment are not always required.

Horsington Parish Council has always operated on a basis of acting on the concerns of our parishioners in relation to planning matters. Where concerns are raised that development is in breach of planning law we seek either to provide an answer if we feel equipped to do so, or to raise the issue to the LPA enforcement team to investigate if we do not. Unlike some Parish Councils, Horsington Parish Council do not actively seek out and report suspected breaches as we believe this approach erodes the good working relationships we have within our villages. We will always act without fear or favour on any concern raised by any parishioner however.

In the case of Cheriton Manor Farm, a concern has recently been raised. In this instance we have been unable to provide a clear answer as it is uncertain whether the businesses are operating within complex permitted development rules. We have therefore referred the matter to the LPA enforcement team who will investigate and deal with any breaches accordingly. The Parish Council have been advised that a planning application will soon be submitted in relation to the dog agility business operating at the site; until we have seen the application we can make no comment on this subject however. Further applications in relation to the site may also be required in due course.

How can I share my views in relation to the proposed campsite with the Parish Council?

We hope that this statement goes some way to providing some comfort to parishioners that the Parish Council understand the real and valid concerns about the proposed campsite. We also want to be clear that any perceived inaction is more accurately explained by a lack of available remedies.

However, should any parishioner have questions or concerns that have not been addressed by this statement then the Parish Council are keen to hear these. Following a long hiatus due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the next regular Parish Council will take place at 7.15pm on Thursday 20th May at St Margaret's Hall (Horsington Village Hall). Any parishioners are welcome to speak at the Public Forum.

The Public Forum does not constitute a debate or Q&A session and, depending on attendance, speakers may be requested to limit the duration of their contribution. The Parish Council may not be able to provide immediate responses or answers, but assure all contributors that their voices will be heard and their views will be taken into account.

Please note that Coronavirus restrictions remain in place and that these dramatically limit the permitted capacity of the hall. We therefore suggest, both to minimise contact and to maximise the opportunity for all that wish to contribute to do so, that only one person from each household attends. Multiple households may also wish to nominate a single parishioner to represent similar views. Unless exempt, any parishioner attending will be required to wear a face covering.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind parishioners that Parish Council is comprised entirely of volunteers who freely give their time to contribute to their community. I fully understand the emotive nature of the potential issues raised by the proposed campsite, but the nature and tone of some of the discourse directed at councillors and our clerk over this matter has at times strayed into the unacceptable. I therefore politely request that all communication and any representations at meetings in relation to this and all matters is kept cordial.

Mark Tucker
Acting Chairman
Horsington Parish Council

May 2021