

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

**APPLICATION TO BE DETERMINED UNDER POWERS DELEGATED TO
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER**

PART III REPORT (INCORPORATING REPORT OF HANDLING)

REF: 21/01081/FUL

APPLICANT: Mr Graham Hodgson

AGENT: Tetra Tech

DEVELOPMENT: Change of use of land and plot layout to form extension to Caravan Park

LOCATION: Land West Of Pease Bay Holiday Home Park
Cockburnspath
Scottish Borders

TYPE: FUL Application

DRAWING NUMBERS:

Plan Ref	Plan Type	Plan Status
KAV	Topographical Plan	Refused
FR004 REV P01	Other	Refused
FR003 REV P01	Other	Refused
FR002 REV P01	Other	Refused
FR001 REV P01	Other	Refused
21001-005	Proposed Sections	Refused
21001-004 REVB	Proposed Site Plan	Refused
21001 - 010	Proposed Sections	Refused
21001 - 009	Proposed Sections	Refused
21001 - 008	Proposed Sections	Refused
21001 - 007	Proposed Sections	Refused
21001 - 006	Proposed Sections	Refused
21001 - 003	Location Plan	Refused
03 REV 02	Landscaping Plan	Refused
02 REV 03	Landscaping Plan	Refused
0100 REV P03	Other	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM	Other	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM BROCHURE	Brochures	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM EXAMPLE	Photos	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM EXAMPLE	Photos	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM EXAMPLE	Photos	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM EXAMPLE	Photos	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM EXAMPLE	3D View	Refused
FLEX RETAINING SYSTEM EXAMPLE	Photos	Refused

NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIONS: 4

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS:

In addition to the local community council (see comments further below) four members of the public from four separate households objected to the application.

The issues raised are summarised below:

- landscape impact to a Special Landscape Area
- overdevelopment of an area of natural beauty
- development not contained within natural bowl of Pease Bay
- impacts to views to Pease Bay and/ from Berwickshire Coastal Path and Southern Uplands Way
- lack of community/ economic benefits
- additional traffic/ traffic speeds/ road safety
- road is poor standard and condition/ state of repair and unsuited to accommodating increased traffic
- heavy vehicles and walkers use the road
- no public transport links
- noise
- flood risk
- it has not been demonstrated that waste water can be dealt with without negative impacts to public health, the environment, and the quality of the nearby burn and coastal waters.

No letters of support were received.

CONSULTATIONS

SBC Access: According to the records held in the Planning & Economic Development Section there is one core path adjacent to this area of land. This is the Scottish Borders section of the Southern Upland Way.

SBC Ecology: No officer in post at the time of consultation.

SBC Economic Development: No response.

SBC Environmental Health: No response.

SBC Flood Risk (1st response): SEPA flood risk mapping indicates that the site is at risk from a flood event with a return period of 1 in 200 years. Requested that the applicant rerun the model reported within their Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for a 1:200 year + 35% climate change event. Additionally requested a post-development flow path drawing for the site. Disagreed with the FRA and requested some attenuation and flow control within the site.

SBC Flood Risk (2nd and 3rd responses): An updated drainage drawing shows that the post development exceedance flows will be routed away from the caravans. Further information and clarifications was sought on other matters. Requested greenfield runoff calculations be rerun for a 1:200 year + climate change event.

SBC Flood Risk (4th response): Objection removed. New topographical information provided confirms that the proposed caravans are significantly higher (more than 8 metres) than the Cockburnspath Burn, and are very unlikely to be at risk of flooding at a 1 in 1000 year flood event. Drainage layout drawing "A117626-TTE-00-ZZ-DR-0100-P03" shows surface water attenuation has been increased to an appropriate 150m³. The drawing also shows suitable controls to surface water discharge to address the issue of flooding to low lying caravans downstream of the application site.

SBC Landscape (1st response): Objects. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) that includes an assessment and summary of the effects on landscape and visual amenity and proposals for mitigation.

This notes that 2no. terraces 40m wide x 218m long with retaining walls would be created. In addition earth works in association with the steep access from the D149 will be required. The report summarises that the 'scale of change' of the landform is likely to be small. I have concerns that the extensive lengths of the 2 terraces and retaining walls are likely to have a greater impact on the character of the landscape than assessed. Furthermore the lodges and their associated hardstanding, access road and dark mass of roofs may serve to emphasise the hard engineering of the retaining structures and terraces particularly in close proximity to the site albeit that mitigation planting is proposed.

In landscape character terms there is a distinct transition between the contained Pease Bay valley and the open expansive tops. The movement from open landscape to enclosure provides an element of concealment and surprise when descending from the cliff tops into the valley, where suddenly the view opens out and the rugged coastline comes into view. The proposed lodges are on the threshold of the transition where the views are most dramatic. Low ridge heights have been indicated to limit intrusion on the views but this has not been supported with details of proposed ground levels, lodge types and ridge heights to show how this will be achieved. The single section through the site is insufficient to support this proposal.

For walkers, cyclists and drivers heading south east on the D149 the view of the site will be of roof tops below road level. For those heading north west on the same road the lodges will be seen stepping up the hill towards Old Linhead. Although the LVA describes the ridge heights remaining below road level to minimise intrusion in the view, there is insufficient information to support this in the form of cross sections, building heights, retaining wall heights and proposed levels. For walkers on the D149 particularly those descending the road the lodges will appear close to the viewer. The scale of rooftops in close proximity to one another in addition to the hard construction of the access road, parking and retaining wall in my view may contribute to a greater magnitude of effects than described. The Armco roadside barrier and proposed fence may also exacerbate the negative effects.

I'm not convinced by the photomontage 7.9 photographed in fairly overcast winter conditions where no element of parking, access road, terracing or decked areas are shown. The lodges also appear to be much further away from the road edge than shown in the drawings. I consider the magnitude of change for people travelling north westwards from Greenheugh Point is likely to be greater than assessed. From the east of Pease Bay where the coastal path meets the road the extent to which the development climbs up out of the 'bowl' will be seen clearly. The density of development with 2 rows of lodges will be more apparent from this location, especially as views out from the lodges facing eastward will be desired, potentially limiting options for and success of mitigating planting.

Fig 7.10 from the beach demonstrates again how this site extends out of the valley. A roof line of the 2 tiers or photomontage would have been valuable in providing a clearer picture of the situation as experienced from the beach. In this case I can't agree that the scale of change would be small as the double row of lodges would appear on a vertical face of the cliff, (in comparison to much of the existing site on the horizontal plane) facing the viewer and covering a significant portion of the enclosing cliffs. Again it is likely that open views are maintained from the lodges and therefore the existing and proposed mitigating planting will be at risk of removal or being cut back to open up views.

Cumulative visual effects would arise from some viewpoints and sequential effects from the footpath and road network. In my opinion these effects are likely to be considerable particularly on approach from Old Linhead south eastwards where the densely developed site would appear in the foreground of views of the existing caravan park. Cumulative effects may also be greater than assessed in local views when heading westwards on the Berwickshire Coastal Path where the site would be seen as an extension to the current caravan park leading up the hillside, albeit that it won't breach the cliff containment of Pease Bay. However cumulative effects should lessen over time if the proposed planting reaches maturity, never the less from a number of viewpoints this proposal will be seen as a significant extension to the existing situation having potential adverse impacts on visual amenity.

An in depth colour assessment has been carried out of the potential colours for the lodges concluding that mid-dark, olive-greens should be used for harmony and to be recessive in the views.

While I broadly agree with this assessment and recommendations the results need to be applied to lodge roofs as well as ancillary structures such as under-build, decking, railings, stilts, which have a tendency to stand out in views.

SBC Landscape (2nd response): Maintains objection.

Clearer indication of the height and scale of buildings has now been provided as demonstrated on Additional Sections 1-3. I agree that the roof ridges are mostly shown below road level and therefore obstruction of views across the wider landscape is likely to be limited. However, the angle of view in a normal viewing field can be from the horizontal to 35 degrees below the horizon therefore there is still

potential for the more local views of the bay and beach to be partially obscured particularly in close proximity to the units when approaching from the west. A photomontage visualisation of this key view would have been helpful in this respect. I remain of the opinion that the scale of this site, particularly when seen in the foreground of the existing development and from the path network and beach will make a considerable intrusion on views and have negative effects on visual amenity. The 'more substantial planting' proposed for the western edge of the site, whilst it would be a welcome contribution in many ways, might also obstruct dramatic views across the bay and SLA on the western approach.

With regard to the flex-MSE system this was considered at the time of the original response. I acknowledge in principle that it could provide a 'softer,' greener approach to retaining wall construction that would be an improvement on the gabion basket proposal. However, I am of the opinion there could still be considerable landscape and visual impacts associated with the heavily engineered changes of levels producing steep retaining walls and terraces on the valley bluffs. The use of flex-MSE also raises questions regarding plant establishment in this exposed coastal location including maintenance and watering implications. The impact of runoff from the road/erosion risk from heavy rain fall may need to be considered too.

As mentioned previously, a further concern is the need for roadside barriers, stilts, fencing, railings, decking, bin stores etc and the additional impacts these will have on visual amenity particularly from views in close proximity and from the beach. Will the very steep and high retaining walls as seen in the Additional Sections require physical barriers for pedestrian safety purposes? Little or no mention is made of these associated structures nor visualisations provided to demonstrate the impacts.

I remain of the opinion that this proposal will have a greater impact on the character of the landscape and on visual amenity than that assessed. The majority of the units would be at a higher elevation than almost any other caravans within the existing park. In addition, this site forms a distinct spur away from the valley floor that climbs the steep valley sides and makes an important contribution to the containment and setting of the existing caravan park development.

SBC Roads Planning: No objection to the principle of this development, but initially raised concerns regarding the gradients of the road within the site, the new junction which is to be formed and the level difference between the site and the existing public road. Later confirmed submitted long section drawings to show these to be satisfactory. Requested conditions to secure AIP and technical approval required for the retaining structures, detailed design of the safety barrier and construction details and formation of the access from the public road.

Cockburnspath & Cove Community Council: Object. We acknowledge that there have been further measures to mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the extension, but continue to have concerns, as do neighbours.

This application destroys gorse land (which is such a feature of our coastline) and changes the coastline and its appreciation, by coming "out of the bowl" of the current development boundaries of the site; it does nothing to encourage less reliance on vehicle use and in fact will contribute to an increase in road use and car transport; it does not encourage the efficient use of resources - eg solar power; rain water collection etc. Further, as stated in our previous objection to this development, there is virtually no support to the local economy, as visitors are encouraged to remain on site and use the on-site provisions. Whilst there is a minimal (usually seasonal) employment bonus, this is temporary in nature and the assertion that it will create further 3.5 jobs is ludicrous, even when using the developer's own figures.

In the Planning Statement in support of this application (section 5.2 in particular) some claims are made which we consider spurious.

We would comment that visitors to Pease Bay do not contribute to the local economy in any measurable way. There are two local shops within Cockburnspath, access to these being wholly dependent on cars; the nearest pub (outwith Pease Bay itself) or restaurant is located in Dunbar, or Coldingham. Visitors are encouraged to remain within the park, which has its own pub, restaurant and leisure complex and we consider the addition of the numbers of visitors anticipated, to only have benefit to the applicant. We cannot see that any workers during the construction phase etc will drive to

Cockburnspath for goods, when they have them next door, on the Pease Bay site. Such statements are, quite frankly, misleading, and designed to attempt to create a sense of benefit where there is none.

PMD2 (Quality Standards) states that development should be in harmony with its surroundings and can be satisfactorily accommodated within the site. The extension proposed will bring the Leisure Park outwith the current landscape "bowl" in which it sits, and impact the road usage and residential amenity of neighbours even more so than currently. In addition, when viewed from Old Cambus (Delgany bungalow and West Mains farm and steading) it will have an adverse visual impact on the coastline. It will have a major impact on Old Linhead (adjacent) removing the current "boundary" between this private home and the leisure complex, impacting on privacy, creating the potential for more noise, and will have negative impacts on the Southern Upland Way (road and track); the Berwickshire Coastal Path; the Hutton Way (which we are trying to support given the tercentenary of James Hutton) and the Berwickshire Cycle path.

EP5 & EP14 - The area is part of the Berwickshire Coast SLA, and the development outwith its current "bowl" will have an adverse impact on the SLA. Contrary to these policies, any benefits of this development, in our opinion, do not outweigh the level of landscape damage.

EP11, EP3 and EP13 also relate to the protection of greenspace - particularly important here to neighbours at Old Linhead as a "separation boundary" and to the protection, rather than damage, to the gorse sea braes which are such a feature of our coastline here. Local biodiversity is not being respected nor supported in this application.

We would also add that last year, during extensive periods of rain, there was significant landslip at Pease Dean (opposite the proposed site) and along the sea braes. Coastal erosion and landslip are becoming more and more of a feature of living in this area, and we are concerned that the work proposed to create a tiered site may contribute to further landslip.

ED8 (Caravan and Camping Sites) states that extensions to existing caravan sites will be supported in locations that can support the local economy - as mentioned above, this is not the case - and must not cause unacceptable environmental impacts. Particularly in this respect, neighbours and the community council have the strongest of concerns regarding the Pease Bay road access to the site:

- The road is narrow and most of its length relies on passing places
- The road has a national speed limit of 60mph
- The verges are already badly eroded especially as it narrows beyond the Wig Wam development and this, according to neighbours, has been largely caused by the large cranes used to move lodges at Pease Bay Leisure Park
- No pavements exist, and part of the road is also the Southern Upland Way
- It is also part of the cycle network in this area
- Pedestrians and cyclists currently feel unsafe on the road due to the speed and volume of traffic, most of which is accessing Pease Bay
- The addition of 19 lodges may mean an increase in cars of 38 - 40. Many lodges currently have 2 cars associated with them, and "fleet hire" lodges may attract more as they sleep 6 in each
- Traffic surveys completed some years ago, took measurements of traffic volume in November and February - in February the site is shut and November is off season. Further traffic census should be completed during June, July and August when traffic is at its peak
- Farm access to Linhead farm is becoming more and more difficult as their land and driveway exit on to the Pease Bay road above the caravan site, and on a bend. Slow moving farm machinery takes its life in its hands exiting and crossing the road already without the addition of any new lodges
- Cove Farm Cottages (4 homes) and all of New Cove (encompassing Cove Farm and associated neighbours numbering 9) also access and egress on to this road and are all finding the increase in traffic a big issue due to the narrowness of the road, and users of the caravan site being unaccustomed to road etiquette re passing places - many are also driving close to the national speed limit.

IS4 and IS5 relate to transport and development, infrastructure and the protection of access routes. There is no sustainable transport to Pease Bay, which relies entirely on car use. No bus services or other links provide any form of access. IS5 aims to keep open any route and access rights, and these

are being gradually eroded (SUW, Cycle paths and Berwickshire Coastal Path) due to the level and speed of traffic to Pease Bay. Also, the SUW will be negatively impacted (adjacent to Old Linhead) as it runs adjacent to the new proposed extension, which will be much closer than at present.

HD3 seeks to protect the residential amenity of neighbours and in our opinion and those of neighbours this proposal will negatively impact on their peaceful enjoyment of their properties from potential noise, increased traffic close to garden grounds (which is already an issue) in particular Old Linhead and Cove Farm Cottages. The potential for damaging effects on all of the properties having access to the Pease Bay road however, is obvious. Indeed, Old Linhead already suffers noise nuisance, and it is inconceivable to further impact on their amenity.

The Agent has indicated that they intend to use the D149 for construction access, but the exact route will be agreed under CMP should the application succeed. They are however, aware of the complications of coming from the south. We would recommend that a TMP be proposed should this application be successful, as it is going to be a lengthy construction period, and require significant soil extraction and landscape remodelling, plus the addition of a further 19 lodges, all of which will need to be transported to site. Whatever construction route is used, it will cause a great deal of difficulty to those who reside in the area and use the country roads for walking, cycling and access to their properties.

Currently the road is in poor condition. Although we acknowledge that other traffic uses this route, the larger heavier vehicles, which are causing such damage, are accessing Pease Bay. In addition to the construction type traffic, there are routine deliveries to the Pease Bay shop, pub, gas supplies and many many supermarket delivery vans which also contribute to the increasing volume of traffic.

The Community Council has no difficulty in promoting and supporting responsible tourism to the area, and certainly appreciates that this can have positive impacts on the local economy. However, there are, in our view, no positives to this application, and the disbenefits far outweigh the very minimal benefits to Cockburnspath and Cove.

SEPA (1st response): Lodged holding objection based on a lack of information. Based on SEPA Fluvial Flood Maps, the site is partially at risk during a 1:200 year event as well as a 1:1000 year event, which this type of holiday accommodation has to take cognisance of due to falling within the most vulnerable land-use category. The lodges are generally set back from the watercourse but it is unclear what height differences exist between the lodges and the Cockburnspath Burn. Further information also required on foul drainage.

SEPA (2nd response): Objection removed. The topographic survey shows the caravans are at least 8m above the Cockburnspath Burn. The proposed caravans would be at low risk of flooding in a 1 in 1000 year fluvial event. Regarding foul drainage, SEPA welcome the changes made to the proposal, but note that the layout is indicative at this time and will require additional surveys of site utilities to identify the most appropriate route. SEPA recommend that the applicant contact the SEPA water permitting team to ensure treatment for the burn can be met. There may be a need for stricter limits but this will be decided by the water permitting team at licence application. Bathing water sensitivity is paramount here.

Transport Scotland: No objection.

Visit Scotland: No response.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICIES:

Local Development Plan 2016:

PMD1: Sustainability

PMD2: Quality Standards

ED7: Business, Tourism and Leisure Development in the Countryside

ED8: Caravan and Camping Sites

ED10: Protection of Prime Quality Agricultural Land and Carbon Rich Soils

HD3: Protection of Residential Amenity

EP1: International Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species
EP2: National Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species
EP3: Local Biodiversity
EP5: Special Landscape Areas
EP13: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
EP14: Coastline
EP15: Development Affecting the Water Environment
EP16: Air Quality
IS5: Protection of Access Routes
IS7: Parking Provision and Standards
IS8: Flooding
IS9: Waste Water Treatment and SUDS

Proposed Local Development Plan 2020

All relevant policies are still to be considered at Examination, with the exception of IS5: Protection of Access Routes of the proposed LDP, which is therefore a material consideration.

Other Considerations:

Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance 2005
Landscape and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance 2008
Local Biodiversity Action Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance 2001
Local Landscape Designations Supplementary Planning Guidance 2012
Placemaking and Design Supplementary Planning Guidance 2010
Waste Management Supplementary Guidance 2015

National Planning Framework 3
Scottish Planning Policy 2014
Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2020
Visit Scotland's Scottish Borders Factsheet 2019 (Jan 2021)

Recommendation by - Paul Duncan (Assistant Planning Officer) on 22nd August 2022

SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed site is an undeveloped, north-facing hillside located adjacent to Pease Bay holiday park within Berwickshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA). It mainly comprises semi-improved grassland, with areas of gorse, scrub and bracken. The site is bound to the north by the Cockburnspath burn, and to the south by the verge of an unclassified public road that connects with the A1 at a roundabout north of Cockburnspath village.

Pease Sands beach and holiday park are located to the east and north-east of the proposed site. Holiday lodges extend up to the far south-east corner of the holiday park which is mostly occupied by static caravans. The holiday park benefits from its own on-site shop and entertainment complex.

Two of Scotland's Great Trails, the Southern Upland Way and the Berwickshire Coastal Path pass the site. Both routes follow the coastal cliffs from the village of Cove to the north of the site. There are long, wide views across Pease Bay to Greenheugh Point and to the proposed site from hillocks that sit above the bay. Heading south, the footpath descends into the steeply sloping cleuch of Cockburnspath Burn. Further south, the path passes the nearest dwellinghouse to the site, 'Old Linhead', before the routes join the public road to the south of the proposed site.

PLANNING HISTORY

This application follows previous applications on the same site:

18/01041/FUL - 25no plot extension (withdrawn).

19/01709/FUL - initially submitted as a 22no plot extension, revised to an 18no plot extensions of the holiday park (refused due to landscape harm, flood risk and foul drainage issues).

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the land to site holiday lodges, and works to facilitate this. Cut and fill engineering works would form two platformed tiers of plots on the north side of the minor public road. A new vehicular access would be formed off the unclassified road in the south-east corner of the site. The top tier of lodges would be served by a new internal road that would run parallel with the public road. In total, the development would accommodate 19no new holiday lodges increasing the total number of pitches at Pease Bay Holiday park to 349no. Of the 19, some 12no would be for private occupation (i.e. holiday homes owned by private individuals) with 7 available for short term holiday let (referred to within the application as hire fleet units). The lodges would meet the definition of a caravan, meaning permission is not sought or required for the lodges themselves.

Significant engineering works would be required. The existing public road would be supported by high retaining walling, vegetated utilising the Gravitas Flex MSE system. Of the top tier lodges, 9no would have in-curtilage, nose-in parking. The remaining 3no top tier lodges and the 7no lodges on the lower tier would utilise a 10 bay communal parking bay located roughly midway along the top tier. A further high retaining walling would separate the lower and top tier, also to be vegetated. A crash/ Armco barrier and fence are proposed off the public road, to provide safety to road users and pedestrians due to the steep drop created by the required engineering works. Paths would provide pedestrian access between the existing site and the proposed development. Soft landscaping is also proposed.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- Planning Statement
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal Report
- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment
- Ecological Appraisal
- 3D visualisations

ASSESSMENT

- Principle

Local Development Plan (LDP) policy ED8 (Caravan and Camping Sites) is a key policy for this application and is supportive of proposals for caravan park extensions in locations that can support the local economy and the regeneration of towns, and that accord with the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. Policy EP14 (Coastal Policy), which aims to afford the Borders coastline with adequate protection from inappropriate development, is significant, and Policy ED7 (Business, Tourism and Leisure Developments in the Countryside) is also of some relevance. National level policies are also relevant. Broadly speaking, these promote economic development and activity, including tourism opportunities, provided the natural environment is safeguarded or enhanced. The National Planning Framework 3's spatial strategy also emphasises the importance of our coast as an economic opportunity and a resource to be protected and enjoyed.

The application supporting statement sets out the potential economic benefits of the proposed development. These can largely be classified as potential direct benefits, namely direct employment, and potential indirect benefits, including visitor spend in the wider local economy and resultant indirect employment, and employment in supply chains.

In relation to direct benefits, the supporting statement states that the existing 330no plot site employs between 20 and 30 people, depending on the time of year. It anticipates a further 3.5 FTE permanent positions could be created as a result of the proposed 19no plot development to attend to groundskeeping, maintenance, administration and catering, with further jobs created at peak times. The Community Council has questioned these figures, which do seem potentially ambitious compared to the level of existing employment (even accounting for the greater proportion of short term holiday let - aka hire fleet - units proposed, which would likely generate greater direct employment).

In terms of indirect benefits, it is generally accepted that caravans occupied as holiday homes provide less economic impact than short-stay holiday rentals where visitors are rotated and are likely to spend more money in the local economy. The application supporting statement acknowledges that most of the economic benefits would be realised by the smaller number of hire fleet lodges.

The supporting statement indicates the proposed 7no new short term holiday let units could generate between 1400 and 2100 additional holiday makers to the area per year. However, this is based on maximum occupancy, which is not currently achieved by the existing short term holiday let units. The Community Council considers these claims to be spurious and state that visitors to Pease Bay do not contribute to the local economy in any measurable way. The views of Visit Scotland were sought on this application and earlier applications, but have declined to comment on any. The Council's Economic Development service also did not respond to the consultation request but were supportive of the previous application.

LDP policy ED8 acknowledges the importance of tourism to economic growth, but seeks to ensure such developments balance other impacts. The pre-ambule specifically notes that caravan developments can be particularly visually intrusive in coastal locations. The Berwickshire coast is a key tourism and economic asset for the surrounding area and is given special protection by LDP policy EP14 (Coastal Policy). Visually intrusive development has the potential to harm this asset, resulting in longer term economic harm. This must also be factored into any assessment of potential economic benefits.

Policy ED8 also draws a clear distinction between caravan site developments which are close to towns, and those in more remote countryside locations as is proposed here. The policy favours caravan site developments within or on the edge of towns which support local shops, services and regeneration objectives. The nearest town or village here is Cockburnspath, around a mile from the site, where shop and service provision is very limited. Coldingham and Eyemouth are a significant distance from the site. The Community Council note that the existing holiday park benefits from its own shop and entertainment complex. Whilst this makes the holiday park more attractive to visitors, it is likely to reduce visitor demand for existing shops and businesses outwith the holiday park. It seems unlikely that the development would make any significant contribution to the sustainability of local shops, services or the regeneration of the nearest towns.

The application supporting statement has set out the potential economic benefits that might accrue from the development, which is helpful, and there is no doubt that some of these benefits would materialise. Overall, however, the level of economic benefit that can realistically be expected from this development is considered to be modest, even at a local level.

Finally, it should be noted that whilst LDP policy ED8 lists Pease Bay holiday park as an existing caravan site, this does not confer any particular significance for this application. The list identifies the main caravan sites in the Borders, which are subject of special policy protection from loss, which is not proposed here.

- Landscape and Visual Impacts

The proposed site is located within the Berwickshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA). The Local Landscape Designations SPG describes the cliffs and bays of the Berwickshire Coast SLA as one of the most dramatic sections of Scotland's east coast. The coastal landscape around Cockburnspath is described as wild, dramatic, and expansive, with steeply sloping landform providing pleasing, secluded landscapes with attractive colours. The SPG recommends that development along the coastal edge is carefully considered.

Local Development Plan policy EP5 (Special Landscape Areas) states that for developments which may affect SLAs, the Council will seek to safeguard landscape quality and will have particular regard to landscape impact, including visual impact. Proposals with a significant adverse impact will only be permitted where the landscape impact is clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national and local importance. Policy EP14 (Coastline) provides specific protection to Berwickshire's undeveloped coastline. More generally, policy PMD2 (Quality Standards) requires all development to be of high quality in accordance with sustainability principles, designed to fit in with Borders landscape surroundings.

In objecting to the earlier application for an extension of 25 plots, the Council's Landscape Section raised particular concerns with: the extensive engineering works; siting the proposed plots across two separate

tiers, with the upper tier close to the public road; the extent of retaining structures required; and the density of the proposed development. The refused 18 plot proposals raised similar concerns.

The latest revised proposal generally retains the same general design approach and layout, but with greater mitigation of landscape and visual impacts. The proposed plots would extend across two tiers, but with two rather than three banks of retaining structures, which would comprise stacked sand and earth-filled bags hydroseeded to vegetate the walling (using the Flex-MSE system), rather than the gabion baskets previously proposed. The density of the developed area is largely unchanged. Further landscaping is also proposed and there are proposals for lodge colours.

The applicant commissioned a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) which was submitted alongside the application. The Council's Landscape Section has reviewed the proposals and LVIA and disagrees with some of its conclusions.

The proposed development would see the undeveloped hillside site transformed by cut and fill earthworks to create two arced tiers of densely arranged holiday lodge/ caravan plots. The applicant's landscape architects considers the earthworks to produce steps or terraces into the wider slopes with the overall gradient and shape of the landscape remaining unchanged. Whilst this may be the case, there is agreement with the Council's Landscape Section that the resulting scale of change would seem significant, and greater than small, as is assessed by the LVIA.

The existing caravan site is considered to have a high adverse visual and landscape impact, but is well contained by landform as it sits within the lower plains of the bay that surround Pease Sands. Both the Council's Landscape Section and objectors have again expressed concern that this new development would spread up the sides of the 'bowl' around Pease Bay, extending away from the existing developed area in the form of a spur.

Two of Scotland's Great Trails, the Southern Upland Way and the Berwickshire Coastal Path pass the site, along the public road adjacent to the site (or, more likely, its verge). The proposed development would be visually prominent at close range for various key public visual receptors. There is disagreement on whether views of the bay and beach may be obscured by the development. The likely impact of the development on long views does not appear to be disputed however. The development would be seen in the foreground of such views, with negative effects on visual amenity.

A crash barrier is required to prevent vehicles exiting the public road down to the lower level of the site. This is required along the public road for the full length of the developed parts of the site as well as where the vehicular access enters the site on high, made-up ground. Crash barriers have a harsh visual aesthetic and may have an incongruous appearance at this location. The crash barrier would also be a significant visual impact concern and could not be mitigated by planting, as is proposed (the Roads Planning Service has verbally confirmed objection to this). A fence is also required to prevent pedestrians falling into the site. The adverse visual intrusion of a lengthy section of crash barrier and the heavily engineered vehicular access at this location would be high. Dependent on final design, the fence (referred to as a pedestrian safety railing in the LVIA) could be impact visual amenity in this location.

Cumulative visual effects would arise, including sequential effects from the footpath and road network. The Landscape Section consider these effects to be considerable, particularly on approach from Old Linhead. Whilst planting is proposed between Old Linhead and the lodges this would take many years to mature and the applicant's landscape architect acknowledges this may not fully screen the development from such long views. The Landscape Section is also concerned views from the Pease Sands beach and Greenheugh Point may be affected, though any such impacts would seem more minor, as well as impacts from stilts, fencing, any additional railings and decking.

The Landscape Section acknowledge the potential benefits of the proposed Flex MSE system, but considers the level of retaining walling and levels changes would still result in considerable adverse landscape and visual impacts.

The application has been assessed on the basis that the Flex MSE system is feasible, however, reliance on this system would have raised further questions and concerns. There is no detailed design for the walling system, which would require to be prepared by a qualified engineer. The resulting scheme may require greater land-take than envisaged, affecting feasibility. An additional concern would be the practical

feasibility of the system in terms of its relationship with the public road and its verge. Discussions to date have not ruled out the principle of using such a system. However it would appear that the system may require the insertion of a geogrid (and potentially backfill) into the hillside, under the road verge, with a range of possible implications. There are further concerns in terms of plant establishment on an exposed, north-facing, coastal hillside, and in terms of maintenance and potential erosion implications. This may prove difficult to address or to regulate retrospectively through the planning system, for example in the event the system failed for any reason.

LDP policy PMD2 (Quality Standards) criterion (e) requires all development to provide appropriate internal and external provision for waste storage. Bin storage can have a significant visual impact and a sensitive, discreet approach often requires careful planning. No details have been provided regarding the management of waste. As well as the visual impact of such requirements, they could also impact opportunities for mitigatory planting.

The Landscape Section maintains its objection on the basis that the development would be harmful to the landscape character of the SLA. There is agreement with this conclusion. It is considered that the proposed development would have a significant adverse impact to landscape and visual amenity, and to the landscape quality of the Berwickshire Coast Special Landscape Area.

- Road Safety

Policy PMD2 requires developments to have no adverse impact on road safety and adequate vehicular access.

Vehicular access to the site would be taken from a new junction with the unclassified public road. The public road connects with the A1 at a roundabout near Co'path and with the A1107 Coldingham Tourist Road. The road is steep and winding in places. It crosses a ford on the far side of the holiday park.

There is significant community concern that traffic might increase on the minor road. Heavy vehicles use the road, which is narrow with passing places for much of its length back to Cove. There is also objector concern at the road's state of repair, and the impact on road safety arising during the construction phase of development. The Community Council request a traffic management plan as regards to the latter. As noted above, the road is used by the Southern Upland Way and the Berwickshire Coastal Path and there is no pavement. There are also no public transport links, therefore the development would be reliant on the private car.

The application proposes the erection of a crash barrier on the north side of the public road. This was previously a requirement of the Roads Planning Service. The precise details would require confirmation and agreement but this could be dealt with by planning condition. A condition would also be required to allow the technical assessment of the proposed retaining walls for the public road. The acceptability of this system is yet to be confirmed, but to date the Roads Planning Service has not indicated it is unacceptable. Otherwise the Service does not object to the application, or the additional traffic levels generated on the public road or wider road network. Transport Scotland also offer no objection in terms of traffic impacts on the A1 trunk road and the aforementioned roundabout.

- Vehicular Access

The new junction would be located in the south east corner of the site. The Roads Planning team are satisfied by the proposed vehicular access proposals. The proposals satisfy LDP policy PMD2 criterion (q) in this regard.

- Parking

Top tier lodges 1-9 (using the plot numbering system shown on landscape plan 03) would each be served by head-in parking bays. The remaining ten lodges, including three lodges on the top tier, would share a communal 10no bay parking area. The lodges on the lower tier would need to access the communal parking area by a staircase. There would be no dedicated turning head. Roads Planning are satisfied by the provision of parking proposed within the site and raise no concerns at the absence of dedicated turning. LDP policy IS7 (Parking Provision and Standards) is considered to be satisfied.

- Residential Amenity

Policy HD3 (Residential Amenity) states that development that is judged to have an adverse impact on the amenity of residential areas will not be permitted.

The nearest dwellinghouse to the site is 'Old Linhead', located a short distance to the north-west of the site. Given the distances involved, there are no privacy concerns. Old Linhead and other residences at Cove Farm would also be affected by increased traffic levels and resulting noise and disturbance. The Environmental Health team have not responded to the consultation request but their response to an earlier application raised no such concerns, nor in terms of noise more generally, and there is no reason to find differently.

- Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage

Policy IS8 of the Local Development Plan states that development will not be permitted if it would be at significant risk of flooding.

A peripheral portion of the proposed site is located within SEPA's 1 in 200 year flood risk area due to proximity to the Cockburnspath Burn. Plots and roads infrastructure would be outwith this area, being set back from the burn. A greater part of the site is understood to be within SEPA's 1 in 1000 year flood risk area. Scottish Planning Policy 2014 (SPP) defines this as being at low to medium risk of flooding and states that a flood risk assessment may be required for the most vulnerable uses. SEPA's land use vulnerability guidance identifies caravans and chalets as being within the most vulnerable use category.

Both SEPA and the Flood Risk Officer lodged holding objections initially. The concerns of both, in relation to attenuation, the discharge rate, and the 1 in 1000 year floor risk area, have been addressed and these objections have been removed. Had the application been supported, it may have been appropriate to attach a planning condition or conditions to ensure the delivery of attenuation/ drainage measures outlined in the Flood Risk Assessment.

- Ecology

Ecological interests include the nearby Pease Bay Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located around 270m to the north, and the Cockburnspath Burn, which bounds the site to the north. Potential environmental impacts could arise during the construction phase (e.g. pollution/ sediment discharge to the burn) and operational phases (e.g. lighting of the site may impact bats) as well as by the loss of habitats. There is also objector concern that landslips may occur.

The applicant submitted an Ecological Impact Appraisal (EclA) with the application. The same report was lodged previously and was carried out in 2018. This found no connectivity to the SSSI, and judged habitats within the site itself to be of low ecological value. No conclusive evidence of protected species was found but breeding birds were considered likely to feed on scrub during the breeding season.

There was no Ecology Officer in post at the time of submission, however the Council's Ecology Section assessed the previous proposals based on the same EclA, which it is acknowledged is now some years old. Potential construction impacts could be managed by a suitable Construction Environment Management Plan, which could incorporate comments from an engineer to address possible landslip concerns. On a largely precautionary basis, the Ecology Section recommended that potential impacts on protected species could be mitigated by means of a Species Protection Plan for bats, badger, breeding birds and reptiles. The Ecology Section also recommended agreement of an updated Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan and did not object to the previous application subject to such conditions.

- Waste Water Drainage

LDP policy IS9 (Waste Water Treatment and SUDS) states that the preferred method of dealing with waste water (i.e. foul waste) associated with new developments would be the direct connection to the public sewerage system. For development in the countryside, the use of private sewerage may be acceptable provided negative impacts to public health, the environment, watercourses or ground water can be avoided. Policy EP15 (Development Affecting the Water Environment) is also relevant in this regard. Private foul drainage arrangements are proposed and would be the subject of licencing by SEPA. Waste water would be

treated by package treatment, with outfall subject to UV filtration before discharge to sea via the Cockburnspath Burn. The proposals are indicative and would require to be controlled by fully suspensive planning condition. SEPA advise that the applicant contact their permitting team to ensure suitable treatment can be achieved. This is an important point and could be relayed by applicant informative.

- Other Matters

The application form states that a public water is proposed. Scottish Water has confirmed capacity. Planning conditions could secure provision and ensure no private supply is used unless agreed by the Planning Authority.

No access routes would be directly affected by the proposals. There is therefore no conflict with LDP policy IS5 (Protection of Access Routes). Indirect impacts such as visual impact would be significant and are considered further above.

The proposed site is classified as Prime Agricultural Land by the James Hutton Institute, however it is steeply sloping semi-improved grassland and does not meet this standard in practical terms.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The proposals are contrary to Local Development Plan policies PMD2 (Quality Standards), ED8 (Caravan and Camping Sites), EP5 (Special Landscape Areas), and EP14 (Coastline). The siting and design of the proposed development would have a significant adverse landscape and visual impact on the landscape quality of the Berwickshire Coast Special Landscape Area. The benefits of the development, including economic benefits, would not outweigh this harm. This conflict with the Local Development Plan is not overridden by any other material considerations.

Recommendation: Refused

- 1 The proposals are contrary to Local Development Plan policies PMD2 (Quality Standards), ED8 (Caravan and Camping Sites), EP5 (Special Landscape Areas), and EP14 (Coastline). The siting and design of the proposed development would have a significant adverse landscape and visual impact on the landscape quality of the Berwickshire Coast Special Landscape Area. The benefits of the development, including economic benefits, would not outweigh this harm. This conflict with the Local Development Plan is not overridden by any other material considerations.

“Photographs taken in connection with the determination of the application and any other associated documentation form part of the Report of Handling”.