

# Plan for permanent traveller site is rejected

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A plan to convert a plot of land in the heart of the Suffolk countryside used for keeping horses into a permanent traveller site has been rejected by planners.

The application for the site at Monks Eleigh, Bildeston, was made by landowner David Penfold to Babergh District Council.

Mr Penfold wanted planning permission to convert it into a pitch for one mobile home, two caravans and a day house containing a kitchen, bathroom, utility room and dining area for him and his family.

But the council received a host of objections from residents in Monks Eleigh and the local parish councils, who said the plans for the site, off Highlands Road, were not suitable.

In an application statement to the council Mr Penfold's agents said the scheme was consistent with planning guidelines and met a need for Gypsy and traveller pitches in the area.

But the council said this was not the case as the scheme did not meet requirements under the National Planning Policy Framework to form a sustainable development.

The report also said the site was in a Special Landscape Area, and the application would also affect the setting of nearby Waggar Farm, a Grade II listed farmhouse, through the mobile homes and caravans.

"It is considered that the application would also fail to maintain or enhance the qualities of the Special Landscape Area as a consequence of introducing alien 'built' features/structures, human activity and associated domestic paraphernalia into the landscape," it said.

Heritage expert Dr Jonathan Duck said in a report to the council that although the harm was considered low, the proposed development would involve the introduction of "alien features" into the countryside in close proximity to Wagger Farm.

"The hard, shiny forms of the mobile home and caravans will detract from the tranquillity and rural character of the place, which are aspects of the setting of Wagers Farmhouse," he said.

The objectors also included the former owners of the land, Strutt & Parker Farms Ltd, who wrote to the council to say that when the land was sold in 2007 a restrictive covenant was placed on the site preventing any form of residential development on it.