

10. FULL APPLICATION – INSTALLATION OF A DISABLED ACCESS CAMPING POD WITH SURFACED PARKING AND WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE PATHWAY TO CAMPSITE BUILDING AND INSTALLATION OF TWO CAMPING PODS IN THE NORTH EAST OF THE CAMPSITE AT NORTH LEES CAMPSITE, HATHERSAGE (NP/DDD/0716/0723, P.9804, 423493 / 383184, 22/08/2016/AM)

Applicant: Peak District National Park Authority

Site and Surroundings

North Lees Campsite is located in open countryside, approximately 1.6km to the north of Hathersage. The campsite is well established and is owned and operated by the Peak District National Park Authority. The site includes three camping fields and a stone building used as a reception and amenity block. The boundaries of the site are generally well screened by existing native mature tree and hedge planting.

Four camping pods have been erected in the north western corner of the site following the grant of planning permission in 2015.

Access to the site is via Birley Lane and the whole of the application site is open access land. The nearest neighbouring properties are the grade II* listed North Lees Hall 170m to the north of the site, a dwelling known as Cattis Side 90m to the east of the site and Bronte Cottage 170m to the west of the site.

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the siting of one camping pod intended for disabled access adjacent to the existing amenity building and a further two camping pods within an area of woodland in the north east corner of the site.

The submitted plans show that the proposed disabled access camping pod would be sited to the west of the existing amenity building. This pod would be 2.83m wide and 4.76m long and sited on a levelled base of the same dimensions. The existing surfaced parking area to the front of the amenity area would be extended to provide two parking spaces adjacent to the proposed camping pod and a new stone flag path would provide access to the amenity block for occupants.

The pods would be constructed in the same manner as the existing four pods approved in 2015 - timber under a curved roof clad with overlapping 'oberon' tiles (a metal tile having a granular textured surface) which are coloured dark brown. The roof overhangs part of the timber base to create a covered area.

The two camping pods in the north east corner of the site would be 2.56m wide and 3.94m long and again sited on a levelled base of the same dimensions. These two pods would be sited within the existing area of woodland with no surfaced access. All of the pods would have a pair of glazed doors in the front gable and a window in the rear for ventilation. Internally the disabled access pod would have two beds, while the two other pods would have an open plan sleeping area. All the pods would have two electric lights and a small oil-filled heater.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be approved subject to the following conditions or modifications.

- 1. Statutory three year time limit for implementation.**

2. Development to be carried out in accordance with specified approved plans.
3. The camping pods shall not be sited anywhere within the application site other than in accordance with the plots identified on the approved plans.
4. No camping pod shall be replaced with any other structure or caravan at any time.
5. Restrict occupancy of camping pods to short term holiday letting purposes (no more than 28 days occupancy by any individual per calendar year) ancillary to North Lees Campsite. The camping pods and the existing campsite shall be retained within a single planning unit.
6. The roof tiles and external finish of the pods shall match the existing camping pods.
7. All new service lines associated with the approved development, and on land with the applicant's ownership and control, shall be placed underground and the ground restored to its original condition thereafter.
8. There shall be no external lighting on the camping pods hereby approved and the camping pods and associated land shall not be provided with any other external source of illumination at any time.
9. No trees shall be felled within the area proposed to site the two camping pods in the north eastern corner of the site other than in accordance with a details scheme (to include details and timing of any tree to be felled and subsequent species, size and location of any new planting) which shall have first been submitted to and approved by the National Park Authority.

Key Issues

- Whether the proposed development is acceptable in principle.
- Whether the visual and landscape impact of the development is acceptable.

History

2014: NP/DDD/0614/0627: Planning permission granted conditionally for the installation of ground source heat pump within the campsite.

2015: NP/DDD/0215/0112: Planning permission granted conditionally for the installation of 4 camping pods and alterations to amenity building.

Consultations

Please note that the consultation period had not closed at the time this report was written. Members will be updated on any new consultation responses or letters of representation received before the meeting.

Highway Authority – No objection, subject to no loss of parking.

District Council – No response to date.

Parish Council – There are no objections to this application. This modernisation will help towards maintaining a viable campsite generating income for the North Lees Estate. The additional pods are not in a prominent position, but in a secluded area. The disabled access pod providing a much needed resource.

Representations

No representations have been received to date.

Main Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 115 in the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks along with the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

Paragraph 17 of the Framework sets out core planning principles including supporting sustainable economic development and high standards of design taking into account the roles and character of different areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty within the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities.

Paragraph 28 in the Framework says that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas and should take a positive approach to sustainable new development. Planning policies should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

Development Plan

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP3, DS1, L1 and RT3

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC4, LR3, LR5 and LT18

Relevant policies in the Development Plan are consistent with national planning policies in the Framework because they promote sustainable recreational and tourism development in the Peak District (including proposals for camping and caravans) where it is consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the National Park's scenic beauty, cultural heritage and wildlife interests.

CS policy RT3 is especially important in determining the acceptability of the proposed development. RT3 says that proposals for caravan and camping sites must conform to the following principles:

- A. Small touring camping and caravan sites and backpack camping sites will be permitted, particularly in areas where there are few existing sites, provided that they are well screened, have appropriate access to the road network and do not adversely affect living conditions.
- B. Static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted.
- C. Provision of improved facilities on existing caravan and camping sites, including shops and recreation opportunities, must be of a scale appropriate to the site itself.

- D. Development that would improve the quality of existing sites, including improvements to upgrade facilities, access, landscaping, or the appearance of existing static caravans, will be encouraged.

The supporting text which precedes RT3 is also a relevant consideration. Paragraph 10.26 says:

“Many landscapes in the National Park are very open, with narrow and often ecologically sensitive valleys and dales, and many areas have poor road access. A restrictive policy is appropriate because national policy gives particular weight to protection of the landscape in national parks. Size is an important factor in assessing the impact of a camping or caravan site on the landscape and traffic movements. The following policy states that small touring camping and caravan sites may be acceptable, but ‘small’ is not defined, either in terms of extent or number of pitches. Appropriate size will vary from site to site. For guidance, sites up to 30 pitches are more likely to be acceptable, although this may be too large in many circumstances. Exceptionally, static caravans, chalets or lodges may be acceptable in locations where they are not intrusive in the landscape. There may be some locations where, through the use of effective design and landscaping, small, simple timber structures may be acceptable as replacements for existing static caravans where this would result in enhancement”.

L1 says that all development must conserve and where possible enhance the landscape character of the National Park, as identified by the Authority’s Landscape Strategy and Action Plan. GSP3 and LC4 require all development to be of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the character, appearance and amenity of the site (or buildings) its setting and that of neighboring properties. LT18 states that safe access is a pre-requisite for any development within the National Park.

Assessment

Camping pods

The application proposes the installation of a further three camping pods which would be occupied as short-term holiday accommodation by visiting members of the public. The proposed camping pods are permanent timber structures which would be placed on the ground within part of the existing campsite. The character and potential impacts of the proposed pods would therefore be more comparable to siting chalets or lodges on the land rather than either touring caravans or conventional tents.

Policy RT3 (B) specifically states that static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted. The supporting text says that, exceptionally, static caravans, chalets or lodges may be acceptable in locations where they are not intrusive in the landscape. RT3 therefore makes a general presumption against this type of development unless it is proposed in locations where it would not be intrusive in the landscape. Consequently, the key issue is whether the proposed additional three pods would be well screened (in accordance with RT3 (A)), or, in other words, whether or not the proposed development would be intrusive in the landscape. This was the key issue when the previous application for four pods was considered in April 2015.

North Lees Campsite is well-established and located within the ‘Slopes and Valleys with Woodland’ area of the ‘Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe’ in the Authority’s Landscape Character Assessment. This area is typically a steeply sloping and undulating topography below the gritstone edge of Stanage. It has patches of acid grassland and bracken, with irregular blocks of semi-natural and secondary woodland. Typically there are open glades comprising small fields enclosed by gritstone walls in this character area, though not in the immediate vicinity of the site itself.

The perimeter planting around the campsite includes Scots pine and oak, with birch and rowan above the campsite, with more broadleaf planting, including alder, surrounding the site down to

its entrance on Birley Lane. The present use of the site for camping has become increasingly well screened by the perimeter trees as these have matured and been augmented with recent planting and natural regeneration.

The effect of the planting around the campsite is such that this site can be described as being very well screened in the wider landscape. Closer views of the site are limited to from Birley Lane as it runs around the site to the east; however, there would only be occasional views of the three pods from here and these would be filtered through the trees and over a high dry stone boundary wall. The proposed sites for the camping pods would also be within corners of the site which are particularly well screened within the woodland.

Officers therefore consider that the proposed development of three additional camping pods at this site can be considered to be small scale and that the development would be well screened within the established caravan site and not intrusive in the landscape.

The proposed design is considered to be an appropriate response in the context of site within well-screened woodland. The applicant has provided a sample of the proposed roof tiles and a specification of the finish for external timberwork which would match the existing pods. The proposed roof tiles and external finishes would give the proposed pods an appropriate dark recessive visual appearance to further mitigate the visual impact of the development.

In this case no further planting is considered to be necessary to mitigate the impact of the proposed camping pods. There are no objections to the small extension of the existing parking area or the proposed flagstone pathway which would not result in any harmful visual impact and would be constructed from appropriate natural materials.

The proposed camping pods would be placed upon the land without the need for excavation and therefore there are no concerns that the proposed structures would have an adverse impact upon the trees within the application site. If permission is granted, a condition would be recommended to ensure that the trees around the two camping pods in the north eastern corner of the site are retained to ensure that they continue to mitigate the visual impact of the development.

The proposed camping pods would be sited outside of the adjacent mature woodland and wooded valley and no other works are proposed within the wooded valley. It is therefore considered that the proposed camping pods would not adversely affect any protected species or their habitat. There would be no changes to existing access or parking provision on the site and the proposed three camping pods would not generate any significant traffic to or from the site compared to the existing situation. Therefore officers agree with the Highway Authority that the proposal would not adversely affect highway safety or the amenity of road users.

Due to the relatively small scale of the proposed development and the intervening distance to neighbouring properties there are no concerns in this case that the proposed development would have an adverse impact upon the amenity, security or privacy of neighbouring properties.

Finally, if permission is granted, a condition would also be recommended to limit the occupancy of the camping pods to holiday use (no more than 28 days occupancy per calendar year by any one person) ancillary to the existing campsite. This is a requirement of policy LR5 to prevent permanent occupation of the pods which would be contrary to the Authority's housing and recreation policies.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be a small scale improvement of the existing facilities provided at North Lees campsite. The proposed camping pods would be sited in very well screened positions within the existing site where they would not be prominent from either

local vantage points or in the wider landscape. The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with relevant policies in the development plan and RT3.

The proposed development would not have any adverse impact upon biodiversity, highway safety or the amenity of any nearby neighbouring property or road users. In this case relevant policies are in accordance with the more recently published National Planning Policy Framework which supports sustainable recreation development which conserves the National Park.

Therefore, in the absence of any further material considerations it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly the proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil