
8. FULL APPLICATION - CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO A SEASONAL CARAVAN & CAMPING SITE AND CHANGE OF USE OF AN OUTBUILDING FOR MIXED USE AT WALLBROOK HOUSE, HIGG LANE, LONGNOR. (NP/SM/1216/1201. P11323, 2/12/2016 409698 /360879/SC)

APPLICANT: MRS M GOODWIN

Site and Surroundings

The development site is located at Wallbrook House, which is situated in open countryside approximately 450 metres north east of Brund and borders the west side of Higg Lane (Unclassified highway). The land amounts to approximately 2.2 acres and is largely flat and open to public view. The perimeter of the field is generally contained within a mix of post and rail fencing, sheep fencing, supplemented with some native hedging and a low drystone walling. The nearest dwelling is Hulme House, a grade II listed farmhouse, sited approximately 60 metres to the north east and on the opposite side of Higg Lane.

Wallbrook House itself is a traditional detached farmhouse, with a single garage constructed from Davy block under a corrugated concrete roof, with ample space within the plot for parking and turning of vehicles. The boundary is enclosed by drystone walling with pedestrian and vehicular access directly from Higg Lane. A further outbuilding of non-traditional construction is located approximately 17 metres to the south of the farmhouse, with the campsite having a separate entrance around 90 metres south of the main dwelling.

The domestic curtilage of the dwelling is surrounded on the north and west sides by a certified camping site/field. A triangular piece of land to the south of the campsite is used for drainage and incorporates the access track to the camping field. A small outbuilding close to the south west of the farmhouse has been converted to accommodate toilets and washing facilities in connection with the campsite. According to the applicant, the site currently holds a certificate for 5 caravans and unlimited tents for use by members of the Camping and Caravanning Club and other recreational organisations.

The landscape character type for the area is defined as Upper Valley Pastures lying in the South West Peak. This is described as a settled pastoral valley landscape, with scattered trees along hedgerows around settlements and following streams. Fields of permanent pasture are divided by hedgerows and occasional drystone walls, with dispersed gritstone farmsteads constructed under stone or clay tile roofs.

Proposal

Permission is being sought, to change the use of the land to a seasonal caravan and camping site and change the use of an outbuilding for mixed use. The change of use to a seasonal campsite would allow the number of touring units to be increased from 5 to 12. The hard standings would be constructed of a cellular grass paving material, 4 of the pitches would remain in the current siting (west of the dwelling and outbuildings) and the remaining 8, positioned in a line along the western boundary of the campsite field. The changes to the garage building would allow a mix of domestic and ancillary uses in connection with the proposed increase in capacity of the campsite.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. By virtue of the siting and layout of the proposed touring caravan pitches in this exposed field setting and with the potential of unrestricted numbers of tents, the proposed development would appear unduly intrusive, having an unacceptable adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding open landscape and the generally tranquil amenity of the area, harming the valued characteristics of the National Park. This would be contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3, L1 and RT3, saved Local Plan policies LC4 and LR3 and to policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, including the provisions of Paragraph 115 relating to development in National Parks.
2. Owing to the increased use and close proximity of the camping site to nearby residential property, it is considered the proposed development would materially harm the living conditions of the occupiers of that dwelling. As such, it would conflict with Core Strategy Policy GSP3 and Local Plan Policy LC4, which seek amongst other things, to safeguard residential amenity.
3. Insufficient evidence has been provided to allow the Authority to properly determine whether the proposed development would not harm protected species, contrary to Core Strategy policy L2 and Local Plan policy LC17.

Key Issues

- The principle of the development.
- The landscape and visual impact of the proposed scheme and;
- The potential impact on the amenity of neighbouring property and;
- The potential impact on ecology and;
- The potential impact on the local highway

Planning History

2016 - Change of use of land to a seasonal caravan & camping site and change of use of an outbuilding for mixed use. Withdrawn to consider further ecological and landscape support.

2008 - Proposed change of use of a partly derelict outside toilet and stable area, into toilet and shower block and altered highway access. Granted conditionally.

2004 - The Authority was consulted by the Camping & Caravanning Club with regard to issuing a 5 caravan site licence. The Authority's response, responded explained that the site was highly visible from the road with little planting and that the site would have a detrimental impact upon the landscape. It was also identified that caravans coming from the north may have difficulty accessing the site due to its geometry.

Consultations

Highway Authority (HA) - No objection, subject to restricting the development being brought into use, until details of a hard material is provided and agreed for the surfacing of the campsite access, between the carriageway edge and the timber entrance gate.

District Council - No response to date

Parish Council - Object, stating that:

Although Fawfieldhead Parish Council support growth of the local economy and rural diversification they recommend that this planning application is rejected for the following reasons;

- 1) There is a significant number of letters from local residents objecting to this development and the Parish Council feels that it is proper to provide support to those residents. There does not appear to be any letter from local residents in support of the Application.*
- 2) There are letters from organisations based outside the Parish, including conservation groups, also objecting to further development at this site.*
- 3) Although there is little concrete evidence regarding noise and nuisance from this site there are possibly valid concerns about the “management presence” at the site at times, such as late evening, when any noise or nuisance may be a problem.*
- 4) Parish Councillors have concerns about “over-development” in an area with limited infrastructure, especially suitability of roads to carry the increase of traffic that further development of the site would clearly bring.*

PDNPA Landscape - The Authority's Landscape Architect states, that there are intermittent long distant views of the site from the Longnor Road (B5053) to the west, whilst clear views into the site can be seen from the adjacent Higg Lane to the east. With no planting proposed on the eastern boundaries, these views would remain, therefore considers there would be a visual landscape objection to the proposal.

However, should the application be minded for approval, the number of caravans should be reduced (8-10) the number of tents identified and restricted to areas away from the northern boundary of the field. The camping season should also be controlled to take into account the bird breeding season with no seasonal pitches and no caravan storage. A passing place near the drive entrance should also be considered in addition to the control of lighting both new and existing to conform to dark skies (reduced light pollution).

PDNPA Ecology - the Authority's Ecologist (based on the submitted evidence) would wish to raise a holding objection, until additional information regarding the impact and possible mitigation of protected species has been submitted for consideration.

Notwithstanding this, should it be minded to grant the application, then Ecology would recommend restricting the number of caravans to 10, siting them closer to the existing buildings and planting low growing native shrubs along the eastern boundary. In addition, no camping on the site during the bird breeding season (March to July inclusive) with an adequate buffer between the boundaries of the site and camping area (6 metres). There should also be no additional lighting permitted as part of the development.

Third Party Representations

There have been 31 letters objecting and 17 letters supporting the application, all of which have been summarised below. (Full copies of all letters can be viewed on the Authority's website).

Main issues of Objection

- Highway concerns - Too many caravans for road network.
- Unacceptable noise levels from campsite - Damaging amenity of nearby residents.
- Lack of screening from surrounding landscape.
- Detrimental impact on ecological interests.

- No provisions for waste disposal.
- Negative impact on landscape, tranquillity and amenity of the area.
- The valley is already well supplied with campsites.
- Impact on nearby listed building.

Main issues of Support

- Impact on nearby residents would be minimal.
- Valuable to local economy.
- Well run and maintained site - Asset to community.
- Education of young people (Duke of Edinburgh Awards).
- Proposed enhancements will have a very positive impact.
- Local tourism should be encouraged and supported.

Two individual reports, the first an Ecology Report and the second a Local Highway Network Review, have been submitted on behalf of an objector. Once more, these can be read in full on the Authority's Planning Website Pages.

Other Independent Bodies:

Friends of the Peak District - Object on intensification of use of the site. Cite noise impact on local properties and risk of cumulative visual intrusion, if sites in the area are allowed to expand.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 17 sets out core planning principles including supporting sustainable economic development and high standards of design.

Paragraph 28 states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas and should take a positive approach to sustainable new development.

Paragraph 115 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.

Main Development Plan Policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, 2, 3, DS1, L1, L2, RT3

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC4, LC17, LC18, LC19, LR3, LR5, LT18

Core Strategy (CS)

GSP1, GSP2 and GSP3, jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conversion and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage assets.

DS1 allows for leisure and tourism development in open countryside outside of the National Park's named settlements

RT3 states amongst other things, that static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted.

L1 says that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character, as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment and other valued characteristics.

Local Plan (LP)

LC4 considers design, layout and landscaping and points out that particular attention will be paid to scale, form, mass and orientation in relation to existing buildings.

LR3 states amongst other things, that the development of a new touring camping and caravan site or small extension to an existing site will not be permitted, unless its scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable and it does not dominate its surroundings.

LR5 states that where the development of a touring or caravan site is acceptable, its use will be restricted to holiday accommodation.

Policies LC17, LC18 and LC19, jointly seek to ensure that no harm is caused to protected species as a result of development being carried out, and that where appropriate safeguarding measures are exercised.

LT18 states that safe access is a pre-requisite for any development within the National Park.

Relevant Guidance

The Authority's Landscape Strategy offers relevant guidance on the application of landscape conservation policies in the Development Plan. In this case, the site is within the Upper Valley Pastures of the south west peak landscape character area.

Assessment

Principle of development

Policies within the NPPF are regarded as material considerations. In particular, paragraph 28 states that policy should support sustainable rural tourism that benefits businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors and which respect the character of the countryside. In this respect, the NPPF supports the proposed development in principle provided it would conserve the landscape character and other valued characteristics of National Park.

Within the Development Plan, DS1 allows for leisure and tourism development in open countryside outside of the National Park's named settlements. RT3 relates to Caravans & Camping, setting out an approach which favours small touring camping and caravan sites, provided they are well screened. Policy LR3 states that development of a new touring camping and caravan site or small extension to an existing site will not be permitted, unless its scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable and it does not dominate its surroundings.

Landscape and visual impact

The existing caravan site/camping field is located to the north and west of the main farmhouse and outbuildings. The eastern boundary of the field lies adjacent to the roadside (Higg Lane) and is contained by a low drystone wall with a post and wire fence behind. The north boundary is contained by post and wire fencing with intermittent hedging, the west side with a low drystone wall and post and wire fencing and the southern edge by a mix of post and wire and post and fence, which define the site boundaries from the open fields beyond. The existing caravan site/camping field is accessed off the main road, approximately 90 metres south from the main group of buildings and is laid to grass aside from 4 of the 5 approved pitches, which have hardstanding (limestone chippings) and associated electric hook-ups.

The proposed extension to the caravan site would involve no physical building work with minimal excavation. In this case, 4 caravan pitches would remain roughly in the same location as the existing, with the remaining 8 pitches laid in a row along the western flank of the site, around 5 metres between each pitch and 8 metres in from the western field boundary. The hard standings would be laid with a Bodpave® cellular grass paving material.

The camping field and access are undoubtedly visible from Higg Lane and also at distance from the Longnor Road ((B5053) and looking down from the minor road between Brund and Townend. From these aspects, it is considered the site chosen for the caravan pitches (combined with the potential of unlimited tents within the remainder of the field) would occupy a particularly sensitive and exposed location, therefore appearing unduly intrusive within the surrounding countryside, having a harmful visual impact, which could be further increased through the introduction of other domestic paraphernalia, such as temporary outdoor seating and barbeque cooking areas, which can often be associated with this type of holiday accommodation.

The scheme would introduce further planting of native species along the northern boundary of the site, which would provide more screening and restrict views in the longer term. However, this is considered would be in excess of 5 years or more, before it produced any impact. Moreover, no planting has been proposed on the Eastern boundary (alongside Higg Lane) therefore these views into the site would still be highly noticeable in this quiet area of the National Park.

Specifically, within the Authority's Landscape Strategy Section - Issues of Change - Tourism and recreation (Page 191) it states, *"This area receives less visitor pressure than many other areas of the National Park and is much valued by its variety of landscapes and tranquillity. Most of the recreation in the South West Peak is concentrated into a few honey-pot sites, with much of the remaining area receiving relatively few visitors..."*

Members should note that where there is a conflict between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority (the Sandford Principle). In this case, it is considered there is a conflict between those purposes; therefore the Authority should attach greater weight to the first purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, over the second purpose of promoting public understanding and enjoyment of the National Park.

Potential impact on the amenity of neighbouring property

The closest neighbouring dwelling (grade II listed Hulme House) lies to the north east, approximately 60 metres from the nearest tip of the application site and around 145 metres from the closest caravan pitch. In this case, it is considered with this degree of separation, the development would not affect the setting of the listed building. However, it is gauged, that the increased number of caravan pitches and unrestricted tent numbers combined would lead to a rise in site activity and potentially an escalation of noise and disturbance, creating a harmful impact on the quiet enjoyment and amenity of the neighbouring property, conflicting with policies GSP3, LC4 and LR3.

Potential impact on Ecology

The applicant has commissioned a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bird Survey report, which considered the impact of the proposal on protected species and wildlife habitats in the vicinity of the development site. However, notwithstanding the reports assessment of impact and recommendations, the Authority's Ecologist still has concerns that the development will have an impact on the local breeding wader population during the bird breeding season. Stating, that without limiting noise and disturbance at key times of the year, it is likely to increase risks of breeding failure and also lead to displacement of curlew. It would also compromise the conservation efforts that have been taken on the adjacent land in encouraging greater numbers

of waders onto the site in the future.

Consequently, the Ecologist does not agree that the proposed mitigation put forward by the applicant would safeguard the local wader population and that further measures need to be explored. In addition, it is requested that additional information regarding the potential effect of the proposal on Barn Owls, which have been recorded in the area are also considered. Given the above, Ecology would wish to raise a holding objection, until the above information has been submitted for consideration. In this instance the applicant has stated, they would be more than happy and willing to commission further ecology work, as recommended by the Authority's Ecologist, should members be minded to approve.

Potential impact on the local highway

Third party objections, including an independent Local Highway Network Review objection have been submitted with regard to highway matters. In response, the Highway Authority states that Paragraph 32 of the NPPF affirms '*Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe*'.

In this case, they consider the place already operates as a camping/caravan site and that Higg Lane are typical of rural lanes in the Peak District. Further remarking, that the current application is for an increase in touring units of up to 7 and compared to the existing use of the site and Higg Lane, this cannot reasonably be considered to be severe. Therefore it would not be reasonable or appropriate to expect this small development to require upgrading Higg Lane.

Subsequently, the Highway Authority raises no objections, subject to a condition restricting the development being brought into use until details of a hard material has been provided and agreed for the surfacing of the campsite access, (between the carriageway edge and the timber entrance gate). The condition would ensure all the access track is surfaced in an appropriate material and the stretch between the carriageway edge and gate entrance are satisfactorily maintained. Subject to compliance with the condition the proposal is considered acceptable in accordance with LT18.

Use and alterations to garage/outbuilding

The garage building is detached and constructed of blockwork under a corrugated iron pent style roof. A metal roller shutter door on the eastern elevation faces Higg Lane. The garage would be used to accommodate a ride-on mower and other tools and implements used to manage the campsite. The application proposes some enhancement to the building, by re-roofing with blue/grey sheeting, with the blockwork on the south and east faced with natural gritstone with Yorkshire boarding above. The north and western sides would be rendered in the lower part and Yorkshire boarding above.

Whilst the alterations are considered an enhancement over the existing, this is a modern structure of no architectural merit. Consequently, Officers have requested (in addition to the proposed), that the roof of the building is equally pitched and clad in materials to reflect the existing dwelling. In this case, the agent has stated his clients would be more than happy to accept these changes should the proposal be granted permission.

Conclusion

The proposed development would be sited within an open countryside setting, where it would be visible from nearby and surrounding vantage points. In this location, it is considered the additional pitches and the potential increase in activity would have a harmful impact upon the character and scenic beauty of the National Park. In this case, Officers have assessed the proposal against Development Plan policies, the National Planning Policy Framework, and all

other material considerations and concluded that it represented a form of development that was not capable of being amended in a way which would make the scheme acceptable within the current application.

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