

8. FULL APPLICATION - CAMP AND CARAVAN SITE FOR UP TO 9 CARAVANS AND USE OF AGRICULTURAL STORE AS ASSOCIATED AMENITY BLOCK. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ACCESS DRIVE TO SERVE THE SITE. BANK TOP COTTAGE, BIGGIN, BUXTON (NP/DDD/0118/0022 416558 / 358755 P11428 MN 16/01/2018)

APPLICANT: MR D LOWNDES

1. Site and Surroundings

- 1.1. Bank Top Cottage is located in open countryside adjacent to the A515 approximately one mile south of Newhaven and ¾ mile south east of Biggin, opposite Bank Top Farm. The site also includes a second market dwelling in a small converted barn, which remains within the applicant's ownership.
- 1.2. The site is accessed directly off the A515, along a gated driveway to the immediate south of the dwelling houses.
- 1.3. A modern agricultural building of sheet metal construction is located at the end of the drive approximately 50 metres south west of the original dwelling house and 25 metres west of the converted barn.
- 1.4. The space between the house and agricultural building is given over to garden and hardstanding, whilst the land to the north, south and west of the agricultural building is open fields.
- 1.5. The fields immediately to the west and south of the agricultural building are bounded by planting belts of established trees along their western edges.
- 1.6. A public footpath runs east to west past the site approximately 90 metres to the south of it.
- 1.7. There is an existing caravan site to the rear of Bank Top Farm on the opposite side of the A515, set back from the road and approximately 150 metres north east of Bank Top Cottage.
- 1.8. The site is outside of any conservation area.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. To use the field to the west of the agricultural building as a caravan site for up to 9 caravans.
- 2.2. The existing agricultural building would be converted to provide an amenity block for those staying at the site.
- 2.3. The existing site access would be closed off, and a new access would be created approximately 30 metres south, with a new access driveway to serve both the dwellings and campsite.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. **The siting of caravans within the field would be significantly harmful to the rural character and appearance of the landscape due to their visibility and prominence in wider views. The proposed access track would also appear incongruous and detract from the appearance of the landscape in more local views. For these reasons the development is contrary to policies GSP3, L1, LR3, and LC4 of the**

Development Plan, and to paragraph 115 of the NPPF, which all require new development to conserve the valued landscape character of the National Park.

- 2. The conversion of the existing agricultural building to provide an amenity block would retain a building with adverse impacts on the appearance of the built environment and landscape, contrary to policies GSP2 and LC4.**

4. Key Issues

- Whether the principle of establishing a caravan site in this location accords with the planning policy
- The landscape impacts of establishing a caravan site in this location
- The policy principle and visual impacts of converting the existing agricultural building to a campsite amenity block
- The amenity impacts of the proposal on the two nearest residential properties

5. Relevant Planning History

- 5.1. 1992 – Planning permission refused for change of agricultural land to garden.
- 5.2. 1995 – Planning permission granted for conversion of barn to holiday accommodation.
- 5.3. 2004 – Planning permission granted for erection of an agricultural building to house sheep. A condition was imposed on the permission requiring the building to be removed from the site when no longer required for the purposes of agriculture. The current application proposes the conversion of this building to an amenity block to serve the proposed campsite.
- 5.4. 2010 – Planning enforcement case opened relating to unauthorised use of agricultural building for domestic storage, and for occupation of holiday let as permanent dwelling house. Case closed in 2011 following return of agricultural building to agricultural use and grant of planning permission for use of holiday let as open market dwelling (below).
- 5.5. 2011 – Planning permission granted for variation of conditions of the 1995 barn conversion permission, authorising its occupation as an open market dwelling.

6. Consultations

- 6.1. Derbyshire County Council (Highways) – It is considered that there is sufficient controlled land to accommodate a suitable access layout. Layout of the access should enable vehicles travelling in opposite directions to pass, and earthworks will be required to provide an approach gradient of 1 in 20, this being extended for a minimum distance to accommodate a vehicle and towed trailer. It would appear that acceptable visibility splays are achievable within the existing highway but would need to be accurately established on site to determine whether there is a need to remove existing roadside vegetation/ trees. The existing access should be formally closed by reinstatement of the verge and erection of a permanent physical barrier across its full width. Conditions to secure these matters have been suggested.
- 6.2. Derbyshire Dales District Council – No response at time of writing.
- 6.3. Hartington Nether Quarter Parish Council – Support the proposal.

7. Representations

7.1. No representations received at time of writing.

8. **Policies**

8.1. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public

When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 8.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.
- 8.3. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that *'great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*
- 8.4. Paragraph 28 of the NPPF explains that 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.

Development Plan policies

- 8.5. Policy GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle, (that is, where there are conflicting desired outcomes in achieving national park purposes, greater priority must be given to the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, even at the cost of socio-economic benefits). GPS1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major development unless it is essential, and the need to mitigate localised harm where essential major development is allowed.
- 8.6. Policy GSP2 addresses enhancement within the National Park and states, amongst other things, that opportunities will be taken to enhance the Park by the treatment or removal of undesirable features or buildings.
- 8.7. Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the

National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.

- 8.8. Policy DS1 provides an overview of the development strategy for the Park. It states that in settlements and in the countryside development for recreation and tourism will be acceptable in principle.
- 8.9. Policy L1 identifies that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted.
- 8.10. Policy RT3 states that small camping and caravan 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.
- 8.11. Policy LR3 states that development of new touring camping or caravan sites will not be permitted unless their scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable, and it does not dominate its surroundings.
- 8.12. Policy LC4 states, amongst other things, that any development must, at least, respect and conserve the landscape of the area.
- 8.13. Policy LT18 states that the provision of safe access arrangements will be a prerequisite of any development, and that where the provision of safe access would damage the valued characteristics of the area, the National Park Authority will consider refusing planning consent.

Relevant Core Strategy (CS) policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L1, RT3, LR3

Relevant Local Plan (LP) policies: LC4, LT18

9. Assessment

Principle

- 9.1. Policy RT3 supports the provision of small touring camping and caravanning sites in principle.
- 9.2. With only nine pitches proposed it is considered that the proposed site would be small enough to comply with this criteria, and so the development is broadly acceptable in principle. However, as set out in policy RT3, the acceptability of the scheme is dependent on the site being well screened, having appropriate access to the road network, and not adversely affect living conditions. These matters are discussed below.

Character/Landscape

- 9.3. The landscape in this area is described as 'Limestone Plateau Pastures' in the Authority's Landscape Strategy document. This is detailed as an upland pastoral landscape with a regular pattern of straight roads and small to medium sized rectangular fields bounded by limestone walls. Tree cover is mostly limited to occasional tree groups, or small shelter belts, allowing wide views to the surrounding higher ground. This description accurately reflects the land surrounding the application site.
- 9.4. As a result of the relatively flat and open landscape, views towards the site from both north and south are possible from distances of up to 300 metres in each direction.
- 9.5. From the south these views are broken up significantly by established planting, some of which is evergreen, and it is considered that this would sufficiently mitigate the landscape

impact of the proposed development when viewing it from this direction.

- 9.6. In views from the north however, tree planting and other vegetative screening is much more sparse. As a result the caravan site would be open to view when approaching the site along the A515 from the north.
- 9.7. The caravans – with their white and reflective surfaces – would be prominent in the landscape in these views. This effect would be exacerbated by the fact that they would be seen backed by dark trees behind, around the edge of the field. This would represent a substantial visual intrusion in the rural landscape of this part of the National Park.
- 9.8. To mitigate against this harm the application proposes new shelter belt planting to the north eastern and north western boundaries of the site.
- 9.9. There is no objection in principle to the provision of this shelter belt – indeed, these are identified as a feature of the landscape in this area by the Landscape Strategy – but this would not provide an immediate mitigation to the harm caused by the siting of caravans within the field. However, it would be many years before an established screen of appropriate species would be sufficiently established so as to effectively screen the development from view. Depending on species, it is also likely that that screening of the site would be more limited from Autumn through Spring when trees would be out of leaf. It is therefore considered that the proposed planting would offer very limited mitigation in relation to the visual harm the development would cause.
- 9.10. For this reason it is considered that the development would result in significant adverse landscape impacts, contrary to policies GSP3, L1, LR3, and LC4 of the Development Plan and the provisions of the NPPF in so far as they promote protection of the National Park landscape.
- 9.11. The proposed new access would be approximately 30m south of the existing and would join the A515 in a gap between some existing mature and young trees. The access driveway would then run back west through the field to the dwellings and proposed campsite. The Highway Authority have recommended that some raising of ground to more gently slope the driveway would also be required, as would ensuring a wide enough driveway to allow vehicles to pass each other.
- 9.12. This driveway would dissect the field and appear an incongruous urbanising feature, even if simply treated, and would detract from the rural and largely undeveloped character and appearance of the landscape in this location
- 9.13. If the proposal was considered acceptable in other regards then a new drystone wall along the southern edge of the proposed access drive could be introduced to reduce the impact of the access. The area of land to each side of the new wall would be large enough that the arrangement did not appear contrived and the wall would serve to partially screen the driveway from wider view and would also ensure that it ran along a field edge, rather than appearing isolated within the centre of one.

Design/use of buildings

- 9.14. It is proposed to convert the existing agricultural building on the site to provide an amenity block for the campsite. The building is of sheet metal construction to the roof and upper walls, with blockwork below; although much of this blockwork is concealed from wider view due to the building being sandwiched between two existing natural stone walls.
- 9.15. When permission was granted for this building in 2014 it was on the basis of an agricultural need. Buildings of this appearance are not otherwise supported by planning policy; their materials, scale, proportions – and often locations – are at odds with those of the local building traditions and commonly result in landscape harm. For this reason the building was

subject to a common condition that requires the building to be removed from the site when it is no longer required for the purposes of agriculture.

- 9.16. Officers do not consider that it would be appropriate to allow conversion of the building to an amenity block as this would undermine the purpose of the aforementioned condition and would retain a building on the site that has been approved only on an exceptional basis. Retaining it in a different and long-term use would perpetuate its detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the adjacent traditional buildings and the wider landscape of the area. This would be contrary to policy GSP2, as it would fail to take the opportunity to remove an undesirable building from the landscape, and contrary to LC4 as the building is not of such design that it would be supported for the proposed use.
- 9.17. Therefore if the building is no longer required for agricultural purposes – as the current proposal to convert it would suggest – then it is considered that it should be removed from the site in accordance with the relevant condition of the original permission for its construction, and in accordance with planning policy.

Camping Provision in the Locality

- 9.18. Policy RT3 particularly encourages touring camping and caravan sites in areas where there is lack of such provision.
- 9.19. In addition to the caravan site on the opposite side of the A515 to the east, a further large caravan site is located on the A515 near Alsop en le Dale a little over a mile south of the application site, and another is located on the A515 at Pomeroy approximately six miles to the north.
- 9.20. It is therefore not considered that there are a lack of similar facilities in the locality in this case. Whilst it is acknowledged that the development would provide some benefit through helping to boost and sustain the local rural economy it is not considered that this would outweigh landscape concerns in this case.

Amenity

- 9.21. The proposed site would be approximately 30 metres from the nearest dwellinghouse, and 50m from the next nearest. Both of these properties are currently in the applicants control.
- 9.22. Given the proximity of these dwellings to the proposed development it is likely that noise and disturbance generated by vehicle movements and the use of the site itself would have some adverse impact on the amenity of the occupiers.
- 9.23. As things stand, the level of use and times of operation of the proposed campsite – and therefore any arising amenity impacts for the adjacent dwellings – would be within the control of the applicant. On that basis there are no objections on grounds of amenity impacts.
- 9.24. However, if the ownership of the properties was to be split from that of the campsite then the occupiers would have no control over these impacts. For this reason it is considered that if permission was granted it would be necessary to secure the dwellings and campsite in common ownership by legal agreement.

Highway Considerations

- 9.25. The Highway Authority have advised that they consider that subject to further details being agreed the proposed new access could be achieved to an acceptable highway safety standard. Their recommendations include ensuring vehicles can pass each other along the access, that land would require building up to ensure a satisfactory driveway gradient, and that some vegetative clearance may be necessary to secure sufficient exit visibility from

any new driveway.

9.26. Officers consider that these issues could be secured by planning conditions if permission was to be granted.

9.27. As a result there are no objections to the proposal on the grounds of highway safety or amenity.

10. Conclusion

10.1. It is concluded that the siting of caravans within the field would be significantly harmful to the rural character and appearance of the landscape due to their visibility and prominence in wider views. The proposed access track would also appear incongruous and detract from the appearance of the landscape in more local views. For these reasons the development is contrary to policies GSP3, L1, LR3, and LC4 of the Development Plan, which all require new development to conserve valued landscape character. Particular regard is also given to paragraph 115 of the Framework in this regard, which indicates that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty within the National Parks.

10.2. Further, the conversion of the agricultural building to provide an amenity block for the caravan site would not accord with policies GSP2 or LC4, retaining a building with adverse impacts on the appearance of the built environment and landscape that should be removed if no longer required for its original purpose.

10.3. Refusal of the application would not result in an under-provision of tourism facilities that would undermine the purposes of adopted policy or conflict with the Authority's statutory duty to promote opportunities for enjoyment of the National Park

10.4. On this basis, the adverse planning impacts that have been identified as arising due to the lack of screening along the north eastern and north western boundaries of the site are not acceptable in terms of the impact on the valued characteristics of the landscape of the National Park.

10.5. Accordingly, the application is recommended for refusal.

11. Human Rights

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

12. List of Background Papers (not previously published)

None