

10. FULL APPLICATION - PROPOSED NEW MENAGE ARENA AND AGRICULTURAL BUILDING IN EXISTING Paddock Field AT HARVEY GATE FARM, BLAKELOW ROAD, ONECOTE - (NP/SM/0819/0843 SC)

APPLICANT: M & MRS A WEAVER

Summary

1. The application seeks permission to construct a Horse Exercise Area (HEA) for private and personal use and a modern agricultural building with associated hardstanding. The key planning considerations are the potential landscape impacts of the HEA and the siting of the agricultural building and the hardstanding required to service the agricultural building. In this case, it is considered the cumulative impact of the overall development would fail to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the wider landscape in this part of the National Park. The proposal is recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

2. Harvey Gate is a small working farm situated around 460m to the east of Blakelow Road (Morridge Top). The farm consists of the main farmhouse, a traditional two-storey barn, (converted to holiday accommodation), a single storey detached outbuilding and a small timber stable block with associated hardstanding. Access is off Blakelow Road and along a descending track to the farm. The nearest surrounding properties to the application site are White Lea Farm, sited around 230m to the south, Dunlea Farm 400m to the north and Dale House at approximately 650m to the east. A number of public footpaths (PRoW's) run to both the east and west of the farm.
3. Within the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, the landscape character type of the area is classed as 'Upland Pastures' of the South West Peak. The area comprising of an upland pastoral landscape with a traditional dispersed pattern of gritstone farmsteads and localised village settlements. Drystone walls and some hedgerows enclose permanent pasture. Trees are scattered along incised Cloughs and around dispersed gritstone farmsteads. This is viewed as a very peaceful rural landscape with open views to surrounding higher ground.

Proposal

4. Planning permission is being sought to construct a Horse Exercise Area (HEA) and a modern agricultural building with associated hardstanding. Revised plans have since been submitted, which show a reduction in the size of the proposed HEA from 60m x 20m to 40m x 20m and reduced the amount of hardstanding associated with the proposed agricultural building. These plans now form the basis of the current scheme.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. **The Horse Exercise Area (HEA) would result in domestication of the landscape in this location, harming its open agricultural landscape character, contrary to policies L1 and DMC3, and paragraph 172 of the NPPF.**
2. **The isolated position of the agricultural building and the large area of associated hardstanding cumulatively detracts from the open landscape character of the area, contrary to policies L1, DMC3 & DME1 and paragraph 172 of the NPPF.**

Key Issues

- Potential landscape harm of the Horse Exercise Area.
- Potential landscape harm due to the siting of the agricultural buildings and the area of hardstanding required to service the building.

History

1994 - (SM1094112) - Change of use from agricultural building to holiday accommodation – Granted.

2019 - (NP/SM/0918/0832) - Change of use from agriculture to agriculture and equestrian. Formation of a ménage and the erection of an agricultural building - Withdrawn.

Consultations

5. Highway Authority - No response.
6. Parish Council - ...*'supports the application on the grounds of personal use and to enhance business opportunities. Landscape screening of both the ménage and barn building have been fully addressed'*.

Representations

7. One third party representation has been submitted in support of the proposal.

MAIN POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

8. 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: Which are; to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and 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.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been revised (2019). This replaces the previous document (2012) 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.
10. In particular, paragraph 172 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
11. In the National Park, the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and the new Development Management Policies (DMP), adopted May 2019. These Development Plan Policies provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. In this case, it is considered there are no significant conflicts between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and government guidance in the NPPF.

Main Development Plan Policies

Core Strategy

12. GSP1, GSP2 - *Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park*. These policies 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.
13. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles*. Requires that particular attention is paid to the impact on the character and setting of buildings and that the design is in accord with the Authority's Design Guide and development is appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park.
14. DS1 - *Development Strategy*. Supports recreation and tourism development in principle in the open countryside. The same policy also supports agricultural development in the open countryside, provided that development respects, conserves and enhances the valued characteristics of the site.
15. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. Seeks to ensure that all development conserves and enhances valued landscape character and sites, features and species of biodiversity importance.
16. RT1 - *Recreation, environmental education and interpretation*. Sets out that (A) the National Park Authority will support facilities, which enable recreation, which encourage understanding and enjoyment of the National Park and are appropriate to the National Park's valued characteristics, whilst RT1 (B) states, that in open countryside, clear demonstration of need for such a location will be necessary.
17. Further Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is provided in the document - '*Agricultural Developments in the Peak District National Park*'.

New Development Management Policies

18. DMC3 - *Siting, Design, layout and landscaping*. Reiterates that where developments are acceptable in principle, Policy requires that design is to high standards and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape. The siting, mass, scale, height, design, building materials should all be appropriate to the context. Accessibility of the development should also be a key consideration.
19. DMR4 - *Facilities for keeping and riding horses*. Accepts that horse riding is an appropriate activity as part of the quiet enjoyment of the National Park and supports development relating to the provision of facilities for the keeping of and riding of horses provided certain criteria are met.
20. DME1 - *Agricultural or forestry operational development*. Allows for new agricultural buildings provided that they are functionally required, are close to the main group of buildings wherever possible and in all cases relates well to existing buildings and landscape features, respects the design of existing buildings and building traditions, makes use of the least obtrusive location and does not require obtrusive access tracks, roads or services.

Assessment of the HEA development

21. The new Development Management Policies support the facilities for keeping and riding horses, with the preceding text suggesting, that whilst planning permission is not

normally required for grazing horses, the construction of exercise rings does require permission. It also recognises that the popularity of such recreation creates pressure for these types of development in places where it is not always easy to find a good design and fit with the valued characteristics of the landscape, particularly where it is relatively open. The combination of buildings and exercise areas, security lighting and paddock style fencing, can create an over-managed feel to relatively simple pastoral and agricultural landscapes.

Principle of the HEA development

22. Policy DS1 states, that development for recreation and tourism in all settlements and in the open countryside will be acceptable in principle. Policy DMR4 accepts that horse riding, is an appropriate activity as part of the quiet enjoyment of the National Park and supports development relating to the provision of facilities for the keeping of and riding of horses.

Siting, size and materials of the HEA development

23. The HEA would measure 40m x 20m, which is a standard dimension for a development of this nature. The HEA would sit on slightly sloping ground towards the south western side of the field and set in approximately 6m from the southern boundary fence line and around 6m from the western boundary of the field. The surface material would be a mix of sand and stabilising fibres. A timber post and rail perimeter fence is proposed, with a timber 5 bar entrance gate positioned to the North West corner of the site. Access to the HEA would be across a proposed hardstanding area and a section of reformed/graded grass.

Landscape Impact of the HEA development

24. In siting terms, the position of the HEA is located in a part of the field that is bounded on the west by a traditional stone boundary wall and to the south by a timber post and rail fence, with some interspersed hedging. The HEA would lie on a slightly sloping site and therefore would require a small amount of re-grading, which is proposed to the north of the site. A timber perimeter fence would surround the ground area of the HEA with gate access on its north western side.
25. The application site forms part of a wider system of upland pasture, which includes drystone walls, hedgerows and scattered trees, and is considered a very peaceful rural landscape with open views to surrounding higher ground. In these respects, the landscape around the application site reflects those key characteristics as identified within the Authority's Landscape Character Assessment. In this case, the artificial surface and embanked landscaping would occupy a particularly sensitive and exposed location, therefore appearing unduly intrusive within the surrounding countryside, having a harmful visual impact, which would be further increased through the introduction of associated equipment such as horse jumps and would stand out as an unnatural and very domestic feature in the immediate landscape, noticeable from wider vantage points, in particular the public right of way at Morridge Top (Blakelow Road), harming the area's open agricultural landscape character and the special qualities of the National Park.
26. Additional planting is proposed along the western and southern boundaries of the site, but this would take a number of years to mature and would not have any significant impact on screening the HEA and associated perimeter fencing, particular from public vantage points in the short and medium term. This domestic intrusion into the open character of the immediate landscape, which carries the highest status of protection in terms of national policy, would be a harmful and significant change to the appearance of the area. The addition of planting does not address the principle, that this proposal is for

development in the wrong place. The scheme is therefore considered unacceptable in landscape terms, contrary to policies L1 & DMC3 in these respects

27. Members are aware that the Environment Act sets out that where there is a conflict between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority (known as '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.

Assessment and landscape Impact of the agricultural development

28. An agricultural building is considered reasonably necessary for the purposes of the agricultural operation at Harvey Gate Farm. The building is of a modest size and is considered proportionate to the needs of the current farming activities.
29. The proposed building would be sited within a field to the south of the main farmhouse. A large new area of hardstanding between the proposed building and an existing timber stable block is also proposed to service and access the building. In this case, whilst the building itself is considered acceptable in size, design and materials for this type of modern farm structure, the siting of the building along with the associated hardstanding would have an unacceptable landscape impact.
30. The building is too detached from the main farm group and not in the least obtrusive location on the farm complex. As a result of its separate location the large expanse of hardstanding is required to connect the building with the existing farmyard. In this instance, the detached position of the agricultural building away from the main farm group combined with the large area of hardstanding it necessitates, detracts from the open landscape character of the area. The scheme is considered unacceptable in siting and landscape impact terms, contrary to policies L1, DMC3 & DME1 respectively.

Potential amenity impact on neighbouring properties

31. The nearest surrounding properties to the application site are White Lea Farm, sited around 230m to the south, Dunlea Farm 400m to the north and Dale House at approximately 650m to the east. A number of public footpaths (PRoW's) run to both the east and west of the farm. In this case, given these separation distances, the amenity of these properties are not considered would be adversely affected by the development. Consequently, the amenity of the nearest surrounding neighbouring properties or indeed any other properties in the locality would not be unduly compromised by the development. Therefore, the scheme in privacy and outlook terms would accord with policies GSP3 & DCM3 in this instance.

Highway & Access matters

32. Access is from the main highway at Morrridge (Blakelow Road) and descends via a lengthy access track to the farm. The Local Highway Authority have not responded to date, however, did respond with no objections to a previously withdrawn similar scheme. There would be no issues on highway grounds. Consequently, the development is considered acceptable in highway safety terms in accordance with policy DMT3 in particular.

Conclusion

33. Due to the proposed siting, both the HEA and the agricultural building would detract from the open and undeveloped character of the countryside, to the detriment of the National park landscape. The application is recommended for refusal on landscape impact grounds.

Human Rights

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

35. List of Background Papers (not previously published)

36. Nil

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