

9. FULL APPLICATION – INSTALLATION OF 4 CAMPING PODS WITHIN THE EXISTING CAMPSITE AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING CAMPSITE BUILDING INCLUDING REPLACING EXISTING WINDOWS AND DOORS ON SOUTH ELEVATION WITH TWO SETS OF DOUBLE DOORS AND REPLACING EXISTING METAL WINDOWS WITH TIMBER TO MATCH THE EXISTING AT NORTH LEES CAMPSITE, HATHERSAGE (NP/DDD/0215/0112, P.9804, 423536 / 383448, 23/03/2015/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.

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 four camping pods in a small area of plantation woodland within the existing campsite and alterations to the existing amenity building on the site.

The submitted plans show that the four proposed camping pods would be sited within a triangular shaped area of woodland adjacent to the northernmost camping field within the site and approximately 70m to the north east of the amenity building. The pods would be fitted around the existing trees within the plantation, which would be retained. Access to the pods would be along a new pedestrian path to an existing area of hardstanding to the south east. The top surface of the paths would be finished with limestone flush with the level of the field with no timber edging.

The proposed pods would be constructed from 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. Two 'family' sized pods, 3.4m wide by 5.4m long and two 'standard' sized pods, 3.2m wide by 4.5m long are proposed. Each would have a pair of glazed doors in the front gable and a window in the rear for ventilation. Internally each pod would have an open plan sleeping area.

The alterations to the amenity building include replacing the existing windows and door on the front elevation with two sets of timber double doors. One pair of doors would be glazed and the other provided with vertically boarded timber doors. The colour and finish of the proposed doors would match the existing. Finally, the application proposes to replace five existing metal framed windows (three to the rear and one on each side) with new timber window frames.

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 be in accordance with the approved samples / specifications and permanently maintained throughout the lifetime of the development.**
7. **No trees shall be felled within the area proposed to site the four camping pods 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.**
8. **No alterations to the amenity building shall be carried out other than between the period between the 1 October and the 1 May in the following year.**
9. **The new windows and doors within the amenity building shall be timber which at the time of erection shall be finished to match the colour of the existing timber windows and doors.**
10. **Access paths to the Camping pods to be surfaced with crushed gritstone, not limestone.**

Key Issues

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

History

2014: NP/DDD0614/0627: Planning permission granted conditionally for the installation of ground source heat pump within the campsite.

Consultations

Highway Authority – No objection because this is an existing campsite with an existing and established vehicular access off Birley Lane.

District Council – No response to date.

Parish Council – Support the application for the following reasons.

The Parish Council believes that the proposals will help secure the ongoing viability of the campsite, which the Council would like to see flourish. The Parish Council does not consider any aspect of the proposals to be visually unacceptable and the changes to the admin/toilet block will improve its appearance.

The Parish Council is of the view that the proposed camping pods are closer together than ideal and it would be desirable to space them out a little more, while remaining within the same triangular copse.

PDNPA Landscape – Raise no objections and makes the following comment.

The present use of this site for camping has existed in an organised way for many years but has become increasingly inconspicuous as the perimeter trees, augmented with more recent planting and natural regeneration, has matured. The site is relatively secluded, with Birley Lane winding past it and up the steep hill towards Stanage, giving only filtered and occasional views, if any, over a high drystone boundary wall.

The proposed additional use can hardly be open to significant landscape objections, given the extent of the existing mixed age tree cover, whose screening effect will be enhanced in the future, rather than diminished, especially from early summer through to autumn.

There are no more distant views of the campsite and above the small field corner proposed for the 4no camping pods the woodland becomes more conifer dominant, which in turn offers more year-long screening. Furthermore, the proposed pods are located on the opposite side of the campsite from the road.

The only mitigation which could offer more screening would be a native hedge along where the fence is located. Also advise that the pods should be suitably coloured, for example in a dark olive green to further minimise visual impact.

Representations

Four letters of representation have been received to date. Three letters support the application and one makes no objections to the application. The reasons given in support of the application are summarised below. The letters can be read in full on the website.

- The introduction of a limited number of camping pods as proposed will not detract from the landscape.
- The proposed development will extend the camping season at the site and attract different groups of visitors to stay in the upgraded facilities who will then contribute to the local economy.
- The proposed development will enhance the attraction of the site for families and disabled people.

Main Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 115 in the NPPF 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 NPPF 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 NPPF 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 NPPF 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 four camping pods which would be occupied as short-term holiday accommodation by visiting members of the public. The proposed camping pods are permanent timber buildings 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 development 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.

In this case, the four proposed camping pods would be sited within a well-established campsite. This campsite is 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 site is such that the 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 four pods from here and these would be filtered through the trees and over a high dry stone boundary wall. The proposed site for the four camping pods would also be within a corner of the site where there is a greater mix of conifers within the woodland which offer screening all year round.

Officers therefore agree with the Authority's Landscape Officer and consider that the proposed development of four 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 in this case has provided a sample of the proposed roof tiles and a specification of the finish for external timberwork. 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. The use of limestone surfacing for the paths would be inappropriate given the geology of the area is gritstone and hence a condition would be recommended to ensure the use of crushed gritstone surfacing if permission is to be granted. Further conditions would also be recommended to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted plans and samples. There are otherwise no objections to the proposed pedestrian path which would follow the line of an existing drystone wall before entering the wooded area and branching off to serve the individual pods.

The applicant has confirmed that the existing trees within the area for the pods would be retained in accordance with advice from the Authority's Tree Officer. The proposed 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 pods are retained to ensure that they continue to mitigate the visual impact of the development.

The proposed pods would be sited outside of the adjacent wooded valley and stream which is defined by the remains of a drystone wall to the north of the proposed pods. No works are proposed within the wooded valley. It is therefore considered that the proposed 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 four 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.

Alterations to amenity building

The application also proposes alterations to the existing amenity building on the site. The alterations include replacing the existing windows and door on the front elevation with two sets of timber double doors and replacing five existing metal framed windows (three to the rear and one on each side) with new timber window frames.

There are no objections to the design of the proposed alterations. It is considered that the alterations to the front elevation would maintain the simple utilitarian character of the building as a whole and would actually simplify this elevation by replacing the existing windows and pedestrian door with two pairs of timber doors. There are no objections to the proposal to replace the existing metal window frames around the side and rear of the building with timber frames. If permission is granted, conditions would be recommended to ensure that the new timber doors and windows are finished to match the existing frames.

The Authority is aware of a known bat roost within the amenity building. The Authority's Ecologist has advised that they have adequate knowledge of this roost site and that no further survey work is required. The proposed works are below the eaves of the building and therefore would not directly impact upon the roost. Therefore, provided that the works to the amenity building are

carried out between the 1 October and 1 May (to avoid disturbing roosting bats), it is considered that the works would not have any adverse impact upon either the bats or their habitat within the building. If permission is granted a condition would be recommended to ensure that works take place within the time period recommended by the Authority's Ecologist.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be a small scale improvement of the existing facilities provided at North Lees campsite. The proposed four camping pods would be sited in a very well screened position within the existing site where they would not be prominent from either local vantage points or in the wider landscape. The proposed alterations to the amenity building would conserve its character and appearance. The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with relevant policies in the development plan and RT3 in particular.

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 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