

FULL APPLICATION – ERECTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL BUILDING FOR SHEEP/STORAGE PLUS AN ACCESS TRACK ON LAND AT SPRING CROFT, POTHOOKS LANE, GRINDON - (NP/SM/1219/1317/SC)

APPLICANT: ADRIAN BESTWICK

Summary

1. The application seeks permission for the erection of a modern style agricultural building, associated hardstanding and an access track to serve the building. The key considerations are, the principle and the potential impact on the character and appearance of the landscape. In this case, it is considered the proposal would have an adverse visual impact on the valued characteristics and appearance of the landscape and the wider scenic beauty of the National Park. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

2. The development site subject of this application, is located within a parcel of land on the eastern side of Pothooks Lane in open countryside, approximately 0.6 km to the south of the village of Butterton. The nearest property is Springfield Farm, sited around 200m to the North West, with a public right of way running along the eastern boundary of the site.
3. The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan designates the site, as lying within the 'Upland Pastures of the South west Peak'. Which is characterised by an undulating landscape with dispersed gritstone farmsteads and loose clusters of dwellings under stone slates or clay tile roofs. Permanent pasture of various shaped small to medium sized fields are enclosed by gritstone walls and some thorn hedgerow.

Proposal

4. Permission is being sought to erect a modern portal framed building. The building would be used to house and breed sheep and store equipment associated with sheep farming. The proposal would also require an area of hardstanding and a new access track off Pothooks Lane.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. **The building, associated hardstanding and new access track, by virtue of their siting and appearance, would have a significant and adverse visual impact on the valued characteristics and appearance of the landscape and the wider scenic beauty of the National Park. The proposal is therefore contrary to the landscape conservation objectives set out in the NPPF and the Authority's Development Plan Policies: Core Strategy GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1 & L1 and Development Management Policies DMC3 & DME1.**

Key Issues

5. The agricultural justification and the effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.

Relevant History

6. None.

Consultations

7. Highway Authority - No response to date.
8. Parish Council - Support.

Representations

9. None.

National Planning Policy Framework

10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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

14. Core Strategy
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. DS1 - *Development Strategy & L1 - Landscape character and valued characteristics, both support agricultural development* in the open countryside, provided that development respects, conserves and enhances the valued characteristics of the site, paying particular attention to impact upon the character and setting of buildings and siting, landscaping and building materials.

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. 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.
20. DMT3 - *Access and design criteria*. States amongst other things, that a safe access should be provided in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality and where possible enhances it.

Guidance

21. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is provided in the adopted guidance note 'Agricultural Developments in the Peak District National Park'. Whilst the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan offers guidance on the application of landscape conservation policies in the Development Plan.

Assessment

Agricultural Justification

22. According to the agent, a sheep flock has recently been established and comprises some 60 commercial breeding sheep and dispersed over 4 land parcels, all of which are local to Grindon. Spring Croft is the only parcel suitable for the building because it is easily accessed from the road, has both a natural and mains water supply and is owned by the applicant. The applicants land holding currently extends to 4 hectares with winter fodder acquired from adjacent holdings in the applicant's family ownership.
23. The agent also states, that the applicant will seek to increase the size of the holding as opportunities arise and livestock numbers grow, whether by purchasing more land or renting. In this case, it can be acknowledged that in most part, the land is being used for the purposes of agriculture and therefore a building and associated works required for use and access, could be considered reasonably necessary for this purpose and proportionate to the possible future needs of the farming unit, should this be increased in the future as stated.

Siting, design and materials

24. In terms of siting, policy states amongst other things, that new farm buildings should be close to the main group of buildings wherever possible and in all cases relate well to and make best use of existing building, trees, walls and other landscape features.
25. The building and associated hardstanding would be sited in open pasture, towards the northern edge of the field, with a proposed access track measuring around 85m in length x 2.8m in width, running parallel almost with the western roadside field boundary, connecting the building and associated hardstanding with an existing field access gate off Pothooks Lane.

26. The building itself would measure approximately 13.8m in length x 9m in width x 4.7m to the ridge. The materials would consist of fibre cement sheeting for the roof, with Yorkshire boarding to the elevations. Access would be through two steel sheeted gates with blinds over, one in the south west facing gable elevation and one in the south east side elevation of the building. The hardstanding/turning area would be laid between the south West gable elevation of the building and the proposed access track.
27. In this case, the design and materials of the structure represents that of a modern agricultural building. Whilst the general form and appearance of the building is not in itself an issue, this does not outweigh the overriding concerns regarding the harmful impact of the siting, including the hardstanding and access track in this exposed location, therefore contrary to policies DMC3 & DME1, respectively.

Landscape Impact

28. Policy does support agricultural development in the open countryside, provided that development conserves and enhances the valued landscape character, as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, and other valued characteristics, such as the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape.
29. In this case, it is considered the development as a whole by virtue of its siting, would have an adverse impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding landscape, that would only be partially mitigated for by the presence of the few existing trees and some hedging along the roadside boundary, much of which the applicant has removed. With regard to landscaping, a scheme has not been submitted with the application, however, it is considered that any further tree or shrub planting would not alleviate the landscape impact concerns particularly in the short to medium terms, as it would appear relatively out of context in this open landscape setting as designated in the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan and indeed should it be considered, would take a number of years before it was properly established.
30. In landscape terms therefore, the new building, associated hardstanding and access track, would in this proposed and isolated location, appear unacceptable in its visual intrusion, having a significant and harmful impact on the locality and the wider landscape setting of the National Park. Consequently, the scheme is considered unacceptable in landscape terms, contrary to Policies DS1, LC1 & DMC3, which seek to safeguard landscape character and the valued characteristic of the area.

Alternative locations

31. During the course of the application, it was made clear that the proposed development would not be acceptable in this location, due to visual landscape impact and that alternative sites in the applicant's ownership, which may be more suitable, should be explored. However, the agent had largely discounted this approach, stating, that other land would be more difficult to provide access to and possibly more visible in the landscape, having the potential to skyline. Whilst appreciating the imaginable problems with alternative locations, it is considered that under the present circumstances, it has not been possible to conduct any site visits to discount this assumption within the current application.

Amenity impacts

32. The nearest property potentially affected by the development, would be Springfield Farm sited around 200m to the North West of the development site. In this case, due to the distance of separation, it is considered the development would have no adverse impact on the working amenity of this neighbouring farm. Consequently, the proposal would accord with policies GSP3 & DMC3 in this respect.

Site access

33. Whilst the Highway Authority have not responded to date, the existing field gate is located practically opposite another working field entrance, at which point although on a slight bend in the lane, has good visibility in both directions, mainly due to the fact that the applicant has removed a large part of the hedging along the roadside boundary of the field. In this case, with the use being for agricultural purposes only, it is considered the proposal would be acceptable in highway term and generally meets the criteria set out in Policy DMT3 in this instance.

Environmental Management

34. The Agent has stated, 'that the building is required as an essential tool in pastoral farming. In itself, it will be of rather modest construction without the need for heating or mains electricity lighting. Vehicular movements to and from the farmed land will if anything be slightly reduced as the building will serve to concentrate intensive needs in one location. The building itself will have natural timber external wall cladding (a wholly renewable material) and floors and trackways can be surfaced with recycled crushed concrete. Water supply is by natural spring water located adjacent to the building'. Accordingly, it is considered the development would essentially follow the principles of Policy CC1 in this regard.

Conclusion

35. The application site is located within an area of special distinct qualities that reflect the character of this part of the South West Peaks, which should be conserved and enhanced as they positively contribute to the scenic beauty of the National Park. Whilst it is acknowledged there would be benefits to the applicant's current and future business intentions from any approval granted for the scheme, this would not outweigh the overall harm resulting from the provision of the overall development in this isolated rural location, which would not relate to any other buildings and only minimal landscape features surrounding. Consequently, the scheme is recommended for refusal.
36. Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.
37. List of Background Papers (not previously published)
38. Nil
39. Report Author: Steve Coombes, Planner.