

7. FULL APPLICATION – REMOVAL OF EXISTING SHARED SEPTIC TANK SYSTEM AND REPLACEMENT WITH SHARED SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT – WOOD COTTAGE, LEEK ROAD, LONGNOR (NP/SM/1120/1066, MN)

APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Summary

1. The proposal is to install a package treatment plant to serve the property, replacing an existing septic tank.
2. The proposed development would reduce groundwater pollution and would result in no adverse landscape impacts.
3. There are no other policy or material considerations that would indicate that planning permission should be refused.
4. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Site and surroundings

5. Wood Cottage is located approximately three quarters of a mile west of the village Longnor.
6. The property is a traditional stone built house and is located in open countryside, with the Millmoorhead wood to the west, north, and east. The property is accessed down a long track off Leek Road. The property is Peak District National Park owned and is currently tenanted.

Proposal

7. The application proposes the installation of a package treatment plant to treat the sewage and wastewater from the property. The sewage and wastewater produced at the site is currently untreated and collected in a septic tank system with the overflow into the field. It relies on a tanker collection for emptying.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. 3 year time limit
2. In accordance with submitted plans

Key Issues

8. The impact of the development on the appearance of the built environment and landscape, and potential pollution.

History

9. No relevant history.

Consultations

10. The consultation period is ongoing at time of writing. Any further responses received between time of writing and the Planning Committee meeting will be reported at that meeting, along with any bearing they have on the assessment and recommendation of the application.
11. Highway Authority – No objection
12. Parish Council – No objection
13. District Council – No response at time of writing
14. Natural England – Reply awaited
15. PDNPA – Archaeology – No archaeological comments or concerns.

Representations

16. None received at time of writing.

Main policies

17. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP3, L1
18. Relevant Development Management Plan policies: DMC3, DMC14

National planning policy framework

19. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first 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 Local Plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Management Policies document 2019. Policies in the Local 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 Local Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.
20. Paragraph 172 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.'

Local Plan

21. 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.

22. 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.
23. 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.
24. Development Management Policy DMC3 requires development to be of a high standard that respects, protects, and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including the wildlife and cultural heritage that contribute to the distinctive sense of place. It also provides further detailed criteria to assess design and landscaping, as well as requiring development to conserve the amenity of other properties.
25. Policy DMC14 addresses pollution and disturbance. It states that development that presents a risk of pollution or disturbance including soil, air, light, water or noise pollution, or odour that could adversely affect any of the following interests will not be permitted unless adequate control measures are put in place to bring the pollution within acceptable limits:
- (i) the amenity of neighbours and neighbouring uses; or
 - (ii) the amenity, tranquility, biodiversity or other valued characteristics of the area; or
 - (iii) existing recreation activities; or
 - (iv) extensive land uses such as forestry and agriculture; or
 - (v) ecosystem services including water supply, groundwater resources and the water environment; or
 - (vi) established businesses; or
 - (vii) potential future uses of the land; or
 - (viii) any nuisance, or harm to the rural character and dark skies of the area, caused by lighting schemes.

Assessment

Principle of development

26. National planning guidance advises that new sewerage systems should connect to mains sewerage wherever possible. Where that is not possible, it advises that package treatment plants can be supported. Only where neither option is viable can septic tanks be considered.
27. In this case, the property is remote, making a mains sewerage connection unfeasible. On that basis, the use of a package treatment plant is acceptable.

Visual impacts

28. The tank would be installed below ground, with only access hatches visible above ground. Impacts on the built environment and landscape are therefore negligible and the development accords with policy DMC3.

Pollution

29. The proposed plant is to be a five person minimum tank, which would more than meet the need of the property it serves.
30. The licensing and output from the plant are controlled by other legislation and are to be secured by the appointed contractor prior to works commencing.
31. In any case, the discharge from a package treatment plant would be treated prior to discharge, significantly reducing any pollution that would arise from the overflow discharge from the current septic tank. Natural England have been consulted on the application as the site is in an SSSI Impact Risk Zone; any response will be reported at the Committee.
32. On this basis there is no reason to conclude that the development would result in pollution contrary to policy DMC14.

Other matters

33. Being entirely below ground and on land controlled by the applicant means that the development would have no impact on neighbouring properties.
34. Whilst the proposed plant would use a small amount of energy in the processing of wastewater, there would be no need for tankers to visit the site to empty it, unlike the current tank. It would also be likely to require fewer maintenance visits. On this basis, it is likely that the development would have a reduced carbon footprint across its lifetime.

Conclusion

35. Overall the development is considered to conserve the character and appearance of the built environment and landscape, to avoid pollution, and protect neighbouring amenity, as required by planning policy.
36. There is otherwise no conflict between the intent of policies in the Development Plan and Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework and there are no other material considerations that would indicate planning permission should be refused.
37. Accordingly, the application is recommended for conditional approval.

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

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